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THE TIME MACHINE
AND OTHER STORIES



STORY THE FIRST

The Time Machine

§ 1

THE Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us His grey eyes shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was that luxurious after dinner atmosphere when thought runs gracefully free of the trammels of precision And he put it to us in this way—marking the points with a lean forefinger—as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it) and his fecundity

"You must follow me carefully I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception"

"Is not that rather a large thing to expect us to

begin upon?" said Filby, an argumentative person with red hair

"I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it You will soon admit as much as I need from you You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of thickness *nil* has no real existence They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane These things are mere abstractions"

'That is all right,' said the Psychologist

"Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence

'There I object,' said Filby "Of course a solid body may exist All real things——"

So most people think But wait a moment Can an *instantaneous* cube exist?"

Don't follow you" said Filby

'Can a cube that does not last for any time at all,' have a real existence?

Filby became pensive "Clearly," the Time Traveller proceeded, any real body must have extension in *four* directions it must have *Length Breadth, Thickness*, and—Duration But through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth Time There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions and the latter because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives"

"That,' said a very young man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp, "that . . . very clear indeed"

"Now it is very remarkable that this is so extensively overlooked" continued the Time Traveller, with a slight accession of cheerfulness "Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people

who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it It is only another way of looking at Time *There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it* But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension '

"*I* have not" said the Provincial Mayor

"It is simply this That Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions which one may call Length Breadth, and Thickness and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others But some philosophical people have been asking why *three* dimensions particularly—why not another direction at right angles to the other three?—and have even tried to construct a Four Dimensional geometry Professor Simon Newcomb was expounding this to the New York Mathematical Society only a month or so ago You know how on a flat surface, which has only two dimensions we can represent a figure of a three-dimensional solid and similarly they think that by models of three dimensions they could represent one of four—if they could master the perspective of the thing See?

"I think so,' murmured the Provincial Mayor, and knitting his brows he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one who repeats mystic words "Yes I think I see it now ' he said after some time brightening in a quite transitory manner

"Well, I do not mind telling you I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time Some of my results are curious For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen another at twenty three, and so on All these are evidently sections, as it were, Three Dimensional representations of his Four Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing

"Scientific people," proceeded the Time Traveller, after the pause required for the proper assimilation of this, "know very well that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was so high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space generally recognised? But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time Dimension."

"But," said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, "if Time is really only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been, regarded as something different? And why cannot we move in Time as we move about in the other dimensions of Space?"

The Time Traveller smiled. "Are you so sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, backward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there."

"Not exactly," said the Medical Man. "There are balloons."

"But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement."

"Still they could move a little up and down," said the Medical Man.

"Easier, far easier down than up."

"And you cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment."

"My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present moment. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have

no dimensions, are passing along the Time Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave Just as we should travel *down* if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth's surface"

"But the great difficulty is this," interrupted the Psychologist "You *can* move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time."

"That is the germ of my great discovery But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence I become absent minded, as you say I jump back for a moment Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground But a civilised man is better off than the savage in this respect He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?"

"Oh, *this*" began Filby "is all——"

"Why not?" said the Time Traveller

"It's against reason," said Filby

"What reason?" said the Time Traveller

"You can show black is white by argument," said Filby "but you will never convince me"

"Possibly not," said the Time Traveller "But now you begin to see the object of my investigations into the geometry of Four Dimensions Long ago I had a vague inkling of a machine——"

"To travel through Time!" exclaimed the Very Young Man

"That shall travel indifferently in any direction of Space and Time, as the driver determines"

Filby contented himself with laughter

"But I have experimental verification," said the Time Traveller

"It would be remarkably convenient for the his-

torian," the Psychologist suggested "One might travel back and verify the accepted account of the Battle of Hastings, for instance!"

"Don't you think you would attract attention?" said the Medical Man "Our ancestors had no great tolerance for anachronisms"

"One might get one's Greek from the very lips of Homer and Plato," the Very Young Man thought

"In which case they would certainly plough you for the Little go The German scholars have improved Greek so much"

"Then there is the future," said the Very Young [illegible]

strictly communistic basis

"Of all the wild extravagant theories!" began the Psychologist

'Yes, so it seemed to me and so I never talked of it until——"

"Experimental verification" cried I "You are going to verify *that?*"

"The experiment!" cried Filby, who was getting brain weary

"Let's see your experiment anyhow," said the Psychologist, "though it's all humbug you know'

The Time Traveller smiled round at us Then, still smiling faintly, and with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, he walked slowly out of the room, and we heard his slippers shuffling down the long passage to his laboratory

The Psychologist looked at us "I wonder what he's got?'

"Some sleight-of hand trick or other," said the Medical Man, and Filby tried to tell us about a conjuter he had seen at Burslem, but before he had finished his preface the Time Traveller came back, and Filby's anecdote collapsed

The thing the Time Traveller held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance And now I must be explicit, for this that follows—unless his explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room and set it in front of the fire with two legs on the hearth rug On this table he placed the mechanism Then he drew up a chair and sat down The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp the bright light of which fell full upon the model There were also perhaps a dozen candles about two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces so that the room was brilliantly illuminated I sat in a low armchair nearest the fire and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time Traveller and the fireplace Filby sat behind him looking over his shoulder The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist We were all on the alert It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions

The Time Traveller looked at us and then at the mechanism "Well?" said the Psychologist

"This little affair," said the Time Traveller resting his elbows upon the table and pressing his hands together above the apparatus, "is only a model It is my plan for a machine to travel through time You ill notice that it looks singularly askew, and that here is an odd twinkling appearance about this bar, s though it was in some way unreal" He pointed o the part with his finger "Also, here is one little white lever, and here is another"

The Medical Man got up out of his chair and peered into the thing "It's beautifully made," he said

"It took two years to make," retorted the Time Traveller Then, when we had all imitated the action of the Medical Man, he said "Now I want you clearly to understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other reverses the motion This saddle represents the seat of a time traveller Presently I am going to press the lever, and off the machine will go It will vanish, pass into future [illegible]e, and disappear Have a good look at the thing [illegible]ook at the table too, and satisfy yourselves th[illegible] trickery I don't want to waste this m[illegible]n be told I'm a quack"

There was a [illegible]se perhaps The Psychologist seemed [illegible]k to me, but changed his mind Then [illegible]raveller put forth his finger towards the [illegible] he said suddenly "Lend me your ha[illegible]turning to the Psychologist, he took th[illegible] hand in his own and told him to put [illegible] So that it was the Psychologist h[illegible] who sent forth the model Time Machine on its inte[illegible] We all saw the lever turn I am ab[illegible] there was no trickery. There was a brea[illegible] and the lamp flame jumped One of the ca[illegible] on the mantel was blown out, and the little machine suddenly swung round, became indistinct was seen as a ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it was gone—vanished! Save for the lamp the table was bare

Every one was silent for a minute Then Filby sa[illegible] he was damned

The Psychologist recovered from his stupor, and suddenly looked under the table At that the Time Traveller laughed cheerfully "Well?" he said, with a reminiscence of the Psychologist Then, getting up,

he went to the tobacco jar on the mantel, and with his back to us began to fill his pipe

We stared at each other "Look here," said the Medical Man, "are you in earnest about this? Do you seriously believe that that machine has travelled into time"

"Certainly," said the Time Traveller, stooping to light a spill at the fire Then he turned, lighting his pipe, to look at the Psychologist's face (The Psychologist, to show that he was not unhinged, helped himself to a cigar and tried to light it uncut) "What is more, I have a big machine nearly finished in there"—he indicated the laboratory—"and when that is put together I mean to have a journey on my own account"

"You mean to say that that machine has travelled into the future?" said Filby

"Into the future or the past—I don't, for certain, know which"

After an interval the Psychologist had an inspiration "It must have gone into the past if it has gone anywhere," he said

"Why?" said the Time Traveller

"Because I presume that it has not moved in space, and if it travelled into the future it would still be here all this time, since it must have travelled through this time"

"But," said I, "if it travelled into the past it would have been visible when we came first into this room, and last Thursday when we were here, and the Thursday before that, and so forth!"

"Serious objections," remarked the Provincial Mayor, with an air of impartiality, turning towards the Time Traveller

"Not a bit," said the Time Traveller, and, to the Psychologist "You think *You* can explain that It's presentation below the threshold, you know, diluted presentation"

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cried the Medical Man, who saw him next. And the whole tableful turned towards the door.

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty, and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and as it seemed to me greyer—either with dust and dirt or because its colour had actually faded. His face was ghastly pale; his chin had a brown cut on it—a cut half healed; his expression was haggard and drawn, as by intense suffering. For a moment he hesitated in the doorway, as if he had been dazzled by the light. Then he came into the room. He walked with just such a limp as I have seen in footsore tramps. We stared at him in silence, expecting him to speak.

He said not a word, but came painfully to the table, and made a motion towards the wine. The Editor filled a glass of champagne, and pushed it towards him. He drained it, and it seemed to do him good: for he looked round the table, and the ghost of his old smile flickered across his face. "What on earth have you been up to, man?" said the Doctor. The Time Traveller did not seem to hear. "Don't let me disturb you," he said, with a certain faltering articulation. "I'm all right." He stopped, held out his glass for more, and took it off at a draught. "That's good," *he said. His eyes grew brighter, and a faint colour* came into his cheeks. His glance flickered over our faces with a certain dull approval, and then went round the warm and comfortable room. Then he spoke again, still as it were feeling his way among his words. "I'm going to wash and dress, and then I'll come down and explain things. . . . Save me some of that mutton. I'm starving for a bit of meat."

He looked across at the Editor, who was a rare visitor, and hoped he was all right. The Editor began a question. "Tell you presently," said the Time Traveller. "I'm—funny! Be all right in a minute."

He put down his glass, and walked to

and drank champagne with regularity and determination out of sheer nervousness At last the Time Traveller pushed his plate away, and looked round us "I suppose I must apologise," he said "I was simply starving I ve had a most amazing time" He reached out his hand for a cigar, and cut the end "But come into the smoking room It s too long a story to tell over greasy plates" And ringing the bell in passing, he led the way into the adjoining room

"You have told Blank, and Dash, and Chose about the machine?" he said to me, leaning back in his easy chair and naming the three new guests

"But the thing's a mere paradox," said the Editor

"I can't argue to night I don't mind telling you the story, but I can't argue I will," he went on, "tell you the story of what has happened to me, if you like you must refrain from interr [illegible] I want to tell [illegible] Badly Most of it will [illegible] like lying So be it! It's true—every word of [illegible] all the same I was in my laboratory at four [illegible] nd since then I ve lived eight days [illegible] such days as no human being ever lived before! I'm nearly worn [illegible] it, but I shan't sleep till I've told this thing over to [illegible] Then [illegible] shall go to bed But no interruptions! Is it agreed?"

"Agreed" said the [illegible] tor, and the rest of [illegible] s echoed "Agreed" And with that the Time Trave [illegible] r began his story as I have set it f [illegible] b [illegible] k in his chair at first and sp [illegible] ke like a [illegible] Afterward he got more an [illegible] ated! In [illegible] n I feel with only too much keenness the [illegible] p n and ink —and above all [illegible] o express its quality [illegible] ely enough but you cannot see [illegible] sincere face in the br [illegible] of [illegible] er the intonation of his voice [illegible] knew h w his expression f [illegible] ed the t [illegible] M [illegible] of us hearers were in shadow for the [illegible] in the smoking room had not been lighted and only the face of the Jour

nality and the legs of the Silent Man from the knees downward were illuminated. At first we glanced now and again at each other. After a time we ceased to do that, and looked only at the Time Traveller's face.

§ 3

"I told some of you last Thursday of the principles of the Time Machine, and showed you the actual thing itself, incomplete in the workshop. There it is now, a little travel worn, truly, and one of the ivory bars is cracked, and a brass rail bent, but the rest of it's sound enough. I expected to finish it on Friday; but on Friday, when the putting together was nearly done, I found that one of the nickel bars was exactly one inch too short, and this I had to get remade, so that the thing was not complete until this morning. It was at ten o'clock to-day that the first of all Time [illegible] began its career. I gave it a last tap, tried [illegible] screws again, put one more drop of oil on the [illegible] and sat myself in the saddle. I suppose a [illegible] ls a pistol to his skull feels much the [illegible] at will come next as I felt then. I [illegible] in one hand and the stopping [illegible] sed the first, and almost imme- [illegible] I seemed to reel, I felt a night- [illegible] g and, looking round, I saw the [illegible] as before. Had anything happened? [illegible] I suspected that my intellect had tricked [illegible] the clock. A moment before, as [illegible] it had stood at a minute or so past ten, now [illegible] early half past three!

[illegible] drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting [illegible] with both hands, and went off with a thud. The laboratory got hazy and went dark. Mrs Watchet came in and walked, apparently without seeing me, towards the garden door. I suppose it took her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she seemed

occupied. So long as I travelled at a high velocity through time, this scarcely mattered; I was, so to speak, attenuated—was slipping like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances! But to come to a stop involved the jamming of myself, molecule by molecule, into whatever lay in my way; meant bringing my atoms into such intimate contact with those of the obstacle that a profound chemical reaction—possibly a far-reaching explosion—would result, and blow myself and my apparatus out of all possible dimensions—into the Unknown. This possibility had occurred to me again and again while I was making the machine; but then I had cheerfully accepted it as an unavoidable risk—one of the risks a man has got to take! Now the risk was inevitable, I no longer saw it in the same cheerful light. The fact is that, insensibly, the absolute strangeness of everything, the sickly jarring and swaying of the machine, above all, the feeling of prolonged ...ing, had absolutely upset my nerve. I told myself I could never stop, and with a gust of petulance I resolved to stop forthwith. Like an impatient fool, I lugged over the lever, and incontinently the thing went reeling over, and I was flung headlong through the air.

"There was the sound of a clap of thunder in my ears. I may have been stunned for a moment. A pitiless hail was hissing round me, and I was sitting on soft turf in front of the overset machine. Everything still seemed grey, but presently I remarked that the confusion in my ears was gone. I looked round me. I was on what seemed to be a little lawn in a garden, surrounded by rhododendron bushes, and I noticed that their mauve and purple blossoms were dropping in a shower under the beating of the hailstones. The rebounding, dancing hail hung in a cloud over the machine, and drove along the ground like smoke. In a moment I was wet to the skin. 'Fine hospitality,' said I, 'to a man who has travelled innumerable years to see you.'

"Presently I thought what a fool I was to get wet
 d up and looked round me A colossal figure, *apparently in some white stone, loomed indis* beyond the rhododendrons through the hazy ur But all else of the world was invisible

..My sensations would be hard to describe As the *lumns of hail grew thinner, I saw the white figure* ore distinctly It was very large, for a silver birch e touched its shoulder It was of white marble, in ipe something like a winged sphinx, but the wings, *tead of being carried vertically at the sides, were* ead so that it seemed to hover The pedestal, it eared to me, was of bronze, and was thick with digris It chanced that the face was towards me, *sightless eyes seemed to watch me, there was the* t shadow of a smile on the lips It was greatly ther worn, and that imparted an unpleasant sugg of disease I stood looking at it for a little sp e alf a minute, perhaps, or half an hour It seer idvance and to recede as the hail drove befor *er or thinner At last I tore my eyes from it for* oment, and saw that the hail curtain had worn adbare, and that the sky was lightening with the use of the sun

I looked up again at the crouching white shape, the full temerity of my voyage came suddenly me What might appear when that hazy curtain altogether withdrawn? What might not have hap- l to men? What if cruelty had grown into a on passion? What if in this interval the race ost its manliness and had developed into some inhuman unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly ful? I might seem some old world savage animal, he more dreadful and disgusting for our common s—a foul creature to be incontinently slain

lready I saw other vast shapes—huge buildings ntricate parapets and tall columns with a wooded dimly creeping in upon me through the lessen-

ing storm I was seized with a panic fear I turned frantically to the Time Machine, and strove hard to readjust it As I did so the shafts of the sun smote through the thunderstorm The grey downpour was swept aside and vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost Above me, in the intense blue of the summer sky some faint brown shreds of cloud whirled into nothingness The great buildings about me stood out clear and distinct shining with the wet of the thunder storm, and picked out in white by the unmelted hail stones piled along their courses I felt naked in a strange world I felt as perhaps a bird may feel in the clear air knowing the hawk wins above and will swoop My fear grew to frenzy I took a breathing space, set my teeth and again grappled fiercely wrist and knee, with the machine It gave under my desperate onset and turned over It struck my chin violently One hand on the saddle, the other on the lever, I stood panting heavily in attitude to mount again

"But with this recovery of a prompt retreat my courage recovered I looked more curiously and less fearfully at this world of the remote future In a circular opening, high up in the wall of the nearer house, I saw a group of figures clad in rich soft robes They had seen me, and their faces were directed towards me

"Then I heard voices approaching me Coming through the bushes by the White Sphinx were the heads and shoulders of men running One of these emerged in a pathway leading straight to the little lawn upon which I stood with my machine He was a slight creature—perhaps four feet high—clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt Sandals or buskins—I could not clearly distinguish which—were on his feet, his legs were bare to the knees, and his head was bare Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how warm the air was

"He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail His flushed face reminded me of the more beautiful kind of consumptive—that hectic beauty of which we used to hear so much. At the sight of him I suddenly regained confidence I took my hands from the machine

§ 4

"In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes The absence from his bearing of any sign of fear struck me at once Then he turned to the two others who were following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet and liquid tongue

"There were others coming, and presently a little group of perhaps eight or ten of these exquisite creatures were about me One of them addressed me It came into my head, oddly enough, that my voice was too harsh and deep for them So I shook my head, and, pointing to my ears, shook it again He came a step forward, hesitated, and then touched my hand Then I felt other soft little tentacles upon my back and shoulders They wanted to make sure I was real There was nothing in this at all alarming Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease And besides they looked so frail that I could fancy myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine pins But I made a sudden motion to warn them when I saw their little pink hands feeling at the Time Machine Happily then, when it was not too late, I thought of a danger I had hitherto forgotten, and reaching over the bars of the machine I unscrewed the little levers that would set it in motion, and put these in my pocket Then I turned

again to see what I could do in the way of communication

"And then, looking more nearly into their features, I saw some further peculiarities in their Dresden china type of prettiness Their hair, which was uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the neck and cheek there was not the faintest suggestion of it on the face, and their ears were singularly minute The mouths were small, with bright red, rather thin lips, and the little chins ran to a point The eyes were large and mild, and—this may seem egotism on my part—I fancied even then that there was a certain lack of the interest I might have expected in them

"As they made no effort to communicate with me, but simply stood round me smiling and speaking in soft cooing notes to each other, I began the conversation I pointed to the Time Machine and to myself Then hesitating for a moment how to express time, I pointed to the sun At once a quaintly pretty little figure in chequered purple and white followed my gesture, and then astonished me by imitating the sound of thunder

"For a moment I was staggered, though the import of his gesture was plain enough The question had come into my mind abruptly were these creatures fools? You may hardly understand how it took me You see I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five year old children—asked me, in fact if I had come from the sun in a thunderstorm! It let loose the judgment I had suspended upon their clothes, their frail light limbs and fragile features A flow of disappointment rushed across my mind For a moment I felt that I had built the Time Machine in vain.

"I nodded, pointed to the sun and gave them such a vivid rendering of a thunderclap as startled them They all withdrew a pace or so and bowed Then came one laughing towards me, carrying a chain of beautiful flowers altogether new to me and put it about my neck The idea was received with melodious applause and presently they were all running to and fro for flowers, and laughingly flinging them upon me until I was almost smothered with blossom You who have never seen the like can scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers countless years of culture had created *Then some one suggested that their* plaything should be exhibited in the nearest building, and so I was led past the sphinx of white marble, which had seemed to watch me all the while with a smile at my astonishment, towards a vast grey edifice of fretted stone As I went with them the memory of my confident anticipations of a profoundly grave and intellectual posterity came, with irresistible merriment, to my mind

"The building had a huge entry and was altogether of colossal dimensions I was naturally most occupied with the growing crowd of little people, and with the big open portals that yawned before me shadowy and mysterious My general impression of the world I saw over their heads was of a tangled waste of beautiful bushes and flowers, a long neglected and yet weedless garden I saw a number of tall spikes of strange white flowers, measuring a foot perhaps across the spread of the waxen petals They grew scattered, as *if wild, among the variegated shrubs* but, *as I say*, I did not examine them closely at this time The Time Machine was left deserted on the turf among the rhododendrons

"The arch of the doorway was richly carved, but *naturally I did not observe the carving very narrowly,* though I fancied I saw suggestions of old Phœnician decorations as I passed through, and it struck me that

they were very badly broken and weather worn. Several more brightly clad people met me in the doorway, and so we entered, I, dressed in dingy nineteenth-century garments, looking grotesque enough, garlanded with flowers, and surrounded by an eddying mass of bright, soft-coloured robes and shining white limbs, in a melodious whirl of laughter and laughing speech.

"The big doorway opened into a proportionately great hall hung with brown. The roof was in shadow, and the windows, partially glazed with coloured glass and partially unglazed, admitted a tempered light. The floor was made up of huge blocks of some very hard white metal, not plates nor slabs—blocks, and it was so much worn, as I judged by the going to and fro of past generations, as to be deeply channelled along the more frequented ways. Transverse to the length were innumerable tables made of slabs of polished stone, raised perhaps a foot from the floor, and upon these were heaps of fruits. Some I recognised as a kind of hypertrophied raspberry and orange, but for the most part they were strange.

"Between the tables was scattered a great number of cushions. Upon these my conductors seated themselves, signing for me to do likewise. With a pretty absence of ceremony they began to eat the fruit with their hands, flinging peel and stalks and so forth, into the round openings in the sides of the tables. I was not loth to follow their example, for I felt thirsty and hungry. As I did so I surveyed the hall at my leisure.

"And perhaps the thing that struck me most was its dilapidated look. The stained glass windows, which displayed only a geometrical pattern, were broken in many places, and the curtains that hung across the lower end were thick with dust. And it caught my eye that the corner of the marble table near me was fractured. Nevertheless, the general effect was extremely rich and picturesque. There were, perhaps, a couple of hundred people dining in the hall, and most of them,

seated as near to me as they could come, were watching me with interest, their little eyes shining over the fruit they were eating All were clad in the same soft, and yet strong, silky material

"Fruit by the bye, was all their diet These people of the remote future were strict vegetarians, and while I was with them, in spite of some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also Indeed I found afterwards that horses, cattle, sheep, dogs had followed the Ichthyosaurus into extinction But the fruits were very delightful, one, in particular that seemed to be in season all the time I was there—a floury thing in a three sided husk—was especially good and I made it my staple At first I was puzzled by all these strange fruits, and by the strange flowers I saw, but later I began to perceive their import

"However, I am telling you of my fruit dinner in the distant future now So soon as my appetite was a little checked, I determined to make a resolute attempt to learn the speech of these new men of mine Clearly *that was the next thing to do The fruits seemed a* convenient thing to begin upon and holding one of these up I began a series of interrogative sounds and gestures I had some considerable difficulty in conveying my meaning At first my efforts met with a stare of surprise or inextinguishable laughter b t presently a fair haired little creature seemed to grasp my intention and repeated a name They had to chatter and explain the business at great length to each other, and my first attempts to make the exquisite little sounds of their language caused an immense amount of amusement However, I felt like a schoolmaster amidst children, and persisted, and presently I had a score of noun substantives at least at my command and then I got to demonstrative pronouns, and even the verb 'to eat.' But it was slow work, and the little people soon tired and wanted to get away from my interrogations, so I determined rather of necessity to let them give their

lessons in little doses when they felt inclined. And very little doses I found they were before long, for I never met people more indolent or more easily fatigued.

"A queer thing I soon discovered about my little hosts, and that was their lack of interest. They would come to me with eager cries of astonishment, like children, but like children they would soon stop examining me and wander away after some other toy. The dinner and my conversational beginnings ended, I noted for the first time that almost all those who had surrounded me at first were gone. It is odd, too, how speedily I came to disregard these little people. I went out through the portal into the sunlit world again so soon as my hunger was satisfied. I was continually meeting more of these men of the future, who would follow me a little distance, chatter and laugh about me, and, having smiled and gesticulated in a friendly way, leave me again to my own devices.

"The calm of evening was upon the world as I emerged from the great hall, and the scene was lit by the warm glow of the setting sun. At first things were very confusing. Everything was so entirely different from the world I had known—even the flowers. The big building I had left was situate on the slope of a broad river valley, but the Thames had shifted perhaps a mile from its present position. I resolved to mount to the summit of a crest, perhaps a mile and a half away, from which I could get a wider view of this our planet in the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One A.D. For that, I should explain, was the date the little dials of my machine recorded.

"As I walked I was watchful for every impression that could possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendour in which I found the world—for ruinous it was. A little way up the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and

crumbled heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very beautiful pagoda like plants—nettles possibly—but wonderfully tinted with brown about the leaves, and incap able of stinging It was evidently the derelict remains of some vast structure, to what end built I could not determine It was here that I was destined, at a later date, to have a very strange experience—the first intimation of a still stranger discovery—but of that I will speak in its proper place

"Looking round with a sudden thought, from a terrace on which I rested for a while, I realised that there were no small houses to be seen Apparently the single house, and possibly even the household, had vanished Here and there among the greenery were palace like buildings, but the house and the cottage, which form such characteristic features of our own English landscape, had disappeared

"'Communism' said I to myself

"And on the heels of that came another thought I looked at the half-dozen little figures that were fol lowing me Then, in a flash I perceived that all had the same form of costume, the same soft hairless visage, and the same girlish rotundity of limb It may seem strange, perhaps, that I had not noticed this before But everything was so strange Now, I saw the fact plainly enough In costume, and in all the differences of texture and bearing that now mark off the sexes from each other, these people of the future were alike And the children seemed to my eyes to be but the miniatures of their parents I judged, then, that the children of that time were extremely precocious, physically at least, and I found afterwards abundant verification of my opinion

"Seeing the ease and security in which these were living, I felt that this close resemblance of sexes was after all what one would expect for strength of a man and the softness of a woman, institution of the family, and the di

occupations are mere militant necessities of an age of physical force Where population is balanced and abundant, much child bearing becomes an evil rather than a blessing to the State, where violence comes but rarely and offspring are secure, there is less necessity—indeed there is no necessity—for an efficient family, and the specialisation of the sexes with reference to their children's needs disappears We see some beginnings of this even in our own time, and in this future age it was complete This, I must remind you was my speculation at the time Later I was to appreciate how far it fell short of the reality

"While I was musing upon these things my attention was attracted by a pretty little structure, like a well under a cupola I thought in a transitory way of the oddness of wells still existing and then resumed the thread of my speculations There were no large buildings towards the top of the hill and as my walking powers were evidently miraculous I was presently left alone for the first time With a strange sense of freedom and adventure I pushed on up to the crest

"There I found a seat of some yellow metal that I did not recognise corroded in places with a kind of pinkish rust and half smothered in soft moss, the arm rests cast and filed into the resemblance of griffins' heads I sat down on it and I surveyed the broad view of our old world under the sunset of that long day It was as sweet and fair a view as I have ever seen The sun had already gone below the horizon and the west was flaming gold touched with some horizontal bars of purple and crimson Below was the valley of the Thames, in which the river lay like a band of burnished steel I have already spoken of the great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in ruins and some still occupied Here and there rose a white or silvery figure in the waste garden of the earth, here and there came the sharp vertical line of some cupola or obelisk There were no hedges, no

signs of proprietary rights, no evidences of agriculture, the whole earth had become a garden

"So watching, I began to put my interpretation upon the things I had seen, and as it shaped itself to me that evening, my interpretation was something in this way (Afterwards I found I had got only a half truth —or only a glimpse of one facet of the truth)

"It seemed to me that I had happened upon humanity upon the wane The ruddy sunset set me thinking of the sunset of mankind For the first time I began to realise an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged And yet come to think it is a logical consequence enough Strength is the outcome of need security sets a premium on feebleness The work of ameliorating the conditions of life—the true civilising process that makes life more and more secure—had gone steadily on to a climax One triumph of a united humanity over Nature had followed another Things that are now mere dreams had become projects deliberately put in hand and carried forward And the harvest was what *I saw!*

"After all the sanitation and the agriculture of to-day are still in the rudimentary stage The science of our time has attacked but a little department of the field of human disease, but, even so it spreads its operations very steadily and persistently Our agriculture and horticulture destroy a weed just here and there and cultivate perhaps a score or so of wholesome plants, leaving the greater number to fight out a balance as they can We improve our favourite plants and animals— and how few they are—gradually by selective breeding now a new and better peach now a seedless grape now a sweeter and larger flower now a more convenient breed of cattle We improve them gradually because our ideals are vague and tentative and our knowledge is very limited because Nature too is shy and slow in our clumsy hands Some day all this will be better

organised, and still better. That is the drift of the current in spite of the eddies. The whole world will be intelligent, educated, and co-operating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

"This adjustment, I say, must have been done, and done well, done indeed for all Time, in the space of Time across which my machine had leaped. The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi, everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during all my stay. And I shall have to tell you later that even the processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes.

"Social triumphs, too, had been effected. I saw mankind housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I had found them engaged in no toil. *There* were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical struggle. The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of our world, was gone. It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population *had been met*, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase.

"But with this change in condition comes inevitably adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science is a mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigour? Hardship and freedom: conditions under which the active, strong, and subtle survive and the weaker go to the wall; conditions *that put a* premium upon the loyal alliance of capable *men, upon* self-restraint, patience, and decision. And the institution of the family, and the emotions that arise *therein*, the fierce jealousy, the tenderness for offspring, parental

self devotion, all found their justification and support in the imminent dangers of the young *Now*, where are these imminent dangers? There is a sentiment arising, and it will grow, against connubial jealousy, against fierce maternity, against passion of all sorts, unnecessary things now, and things that make us uncomfortable, savage survivals, discords in a refined and pleasant life

"I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature For after the battle comes Quiet Humanity had been strong, energetic, and intelligent, and had used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived And now came the reaction of the altered conditions

"Under the new conditions of perfect comfort and security, *that restless energy, that with us is strength*, would become weakness Even in our own time certain tendencies and desires, once necessary to survival, are a constant source of failure Physical courage and the love of battle, for instance, are no great help—may even be hindrances—to a civilised man And in a state of physical balance and security, power, intellectual as well as physical, would be out of place For countless years I judged there had been no danger of war or solitary violence, no danger from wild beasts, no wasting disease to require strength of constitution, no need of toil For such a life, what we should call the weak are as well equipped as the strong are indeed no longer weak Better equipped indeed they are, for the strong would be fretted by an energy for which there was no outlet No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was the outcome of the last surgings of the now purposeless energy of mankind before it settled down into perfect harmony with the conditions under which it lived—the flourish of that triumph which began the last great peace This has ever been the fate of energy

in security, it takes to art and to eroticism, and then come languor and decay

"Even this artistic impetus would at last die away—had almost died in the Time I saw To adorn them selves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight, so much was left of the artistic spirit, and no more Even that would fade in the end into a contented inactivity We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity, and, it seemed to me that here was that hateful grindstone broken at last!

"As I stood there in the gathering dark I thought that in this simple explanation I had mastered the problem of the world—mastered the whole secret of these delicious people Possibly the checks they had devised for the increase of population had succeeded too well, and their numbers had rather diminished than kept stationary That would account for the abandoned ruins Very simple was my explanation, and plausible enough—as most wrong theories are!

§ 5

"As I stood there musing over this too perfect triumph of man the full moon, yellow and gibbous, came up out of an overflow of silver light in the north east The bright little figures ceased to move about below a noiseless owl flitted by and I shivered with the chill of the night I determined to descend and find where I could sleep

"I looked for the building I knew Then my eye travelled along to the figure of the White Sphinx upon the pedestal of bronze, growing distinct as the light of the rising moon grew brighter I could see the silver birch against it There was the tangle of rhododendron bushes, black in the pale light, and there was the little lawn I looked at the lawn again A queer doubt chilled my complacency "No,' said I stoutly to myself, 'that was not the lawn'

"But it *was* the lawn For the white leprous face of the sphinx was towards it Can you imagine what I felt as this conviction came home to me? But you cannot The Time Machine was gone!

"At once, like a lash across the face, came the possibility of losing my own age of being left helpless in this strange new world The bare thought of it was an actual physical sensation I could feel it grip me at the throat and stop my breathing In another moment I was in a passion of fear and running with great leaping strides down the slope Once I fell headlong and cut my face, I lost no time in stanching the blood, but jumped up and ran on, with a warm trickle down my cheek and chin All the time I ran I was saying to myself, 'They have moved it a little, pushed it under the bushes out of the way' Nevertheless, I ran with all my might All the time, with the certainty that sometimes comes with excessive dread, I knew that such assurance was folly, knew instinctively that the machine was removed out of my reach My breath came with pain I suppose I covered the whole distance from the hill crest to the little lawn, two miles, perhaps, in ten minutes And I am not a young man I cursed aloud, as I ran, at my confident folly in leaving the machine wasting good breath thereby I cried aloud and none answered Not a creature seemed to be stirring in that moonlit world

"When I reached the lawn my worst fears were realised Not a trace of the thing was to be seen I felt faint and cold when I faced the empty space among the black tangle of bushes I ran round it furiously, as if the thing might be hidden in a corner, and then stopped abruptly, with my hands clutching my hair Above me towered the sphinx upon the bronze pedestal white, shining, leprous, in the light of the rising moon It seemed to smile in mockery of my dismay

"I might have consoled myself by imagining the little people had put the mechanism in some shelter for

me, had I not felt assured of their physical and intellectual inadequacy That is what dismayed me the sense of some hitherto unsuspected power, through whose intervention my invention had vanished Yet, of one thing I felt assured unless some other age had produced its exact duplicate, the machine could not have moved in time The attachment of the levers—I will show you the method later—prevented any one from tampering with it in that way when they were removed It had moved, and was hid, only in space But then, where could it be?

"I think I must have had a kind of frenzy I remember running violently in and out among the moon lit bushes all round the sphinx, and startling some white animal that, in the dim light, I took for a small deer I remember, too, late that night, beating the bushes with my clenched fists until my knuckles were gashed and bleeding from the broken twigs Then, sobbing and raving in my anguish of mind, I went down to the great building of stone The big hall was dark, silent, and deserted I slipped on the uneven floor, and fell over one of the malachite tables, almost breaking my shin I lit a match and went on past the dusty curtains, of which I have told you

"There I found a second great hall covered with cushions, upon which, perhaps a score or so of the little people were sleeping I have no doubt they found my second appearance strange enough, coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness with inarticulate noises and the splutter and flare of a match For they had forgotten about matches 'Where is my Time Machine?' I began, bawling like an angry child laying hands upon them and shaking them up together It must have been very queer to them Some laughed, most of them looked sorely frightened When I saw them standing round me, it came into my head that I was doing as foolish a thing as it was possible for me to do under the circumstances, in trying to revive the sensation of

fear. For, reasoning from their daylight behaviour, I thought that fear must be forgotten

"Abruptly, I dashed down the match, and, knocking one of the people over in my course, went blundering across the big dining hall again out under the moonlight I heard cries of terror and their little feet running and stumbling this way and that I do not remember all I did as the moon crept up the sky I suppose it was the unexpected nature of my loss that maddened me I felt hopelessly cut off from my own kind —a strange animal in an unknown world I must have raved to and fro, screaming and crying upon God and Fate I have a memory of horrible fatigue, as the long night of despair wore away of looking in this impossible place and that, of groping among moonlit ruins and touching strange creatures in the black shadows, at last, of lying on the ground near the sphinx and weeping with absolute wretchedness I had nothing left but misery Then I slept and when I woke again it was full day, and a couple of sparrows were hopping round me on the turf within reach of my arm

"I sat up in the freshness of the morning, trying to remember how I had got there and why I had such a profound sense of desertion and despair Then things came clear in my mind With the plain reasonable daylight, I could look my circumstances fairly in the face I saw the wild folly of my frenzy overnight, and I could reason with myself 'Suppose the worst?' I said 'Suppose the machine altogether lost—perhaps destroyed? It behoves me to be calm and patient, to learn the way of the people, to get a clear idea of the method of my loss and the means of getting materials and tools so that in the end perhaps, I may make another' That would be my only hope, a poor hope perhaps but better than despair And, after all, it was a beautiful and curious world

"But probably the machine had only been taken away Still, I must be calm and patient, find its

hiding place, and recover it by force or cunning And with that I scrambled to my feet and looked about me wondering where I could bathe I felt weary, stiff, and travel soiled The freshness of the morning made me desire an equal freshness I had exhausted my emotion Indeed, as I went about my business, I found myself wondering at my intense excitement overnight I made a careful examination of the ground about the little lawn I wasted some time in futile questionings conveyed, as well as I was able to such of the little people as came by They all failed to understand my gestures some were simply stol d some thought it was a jest and laughed at me I had the hardest task in the world to keep my hands off their pretty laughing faces It was a foolish impulse, but the devil begotten of fear and blind anger was ill curbed and still eager to take advantage of my perplexity The turf gave better counsel I found a groove ripped in it, about midway between the pedestal of the sphinx and the marks of my feet where on arrival, I had struggled with the overturned machine There were other signs of removal about, with queer narrow footprints like those I could imagine made by a sloth This directed my closer attention to the pedestal It was, as I think I have said of bronze It was not a mere block, but highly decorated with deep framed panels on either side I vent and rapped at these The pedestal was hollow Exan ining the panels with care I found them discon tinu ous with the frames There were no handles or keyholes but possibly the panels if they were doors as I supposed opened from within One thing was clear eno igh to my mind It took no very great mental effort to infer that my Time Machine was inside that pedestal But how it got there was a different problem

'I saw the heads of two orange clad people coming through the bushes and under some blossom covered apple trees towards me I turned smiling to them and beckoned them to me They came and then pointing

to the bronze pedestal, I tried to intimate my wish to open it But at my first gesture towards this they behaved very oddly I don't know how to convey their expression to you Suppose you were to use a grossly improper gesture to a delicate minded woman—it is how she would look They went off as if they had received the last possible insult I tried a sweet looking little chap in white next, with exactly the same result Somehow, his manner made me feel ashamed of myself But, as you know I wanted the Time Machine, and I tried him once more As he turned off, like the others, my temper got the better of me In three strides I was after him had him by the loose part of his robe round the neck and began dragging him towards the sphinx Then I saw the horror and repugnance of his face, and all of a sudden I let him go

"But I was not beaten yet I banged with my fist at the bronze panels I thought I heard something stir inside—to be explicit, I thought I heard a sound like a chuckle—but I must have been mistaken Then I got a big pebble from the river and came and hammered till I had flattened a coil in the decorations, and the verdigris came off in powdery flakes The delicate little people must have heard me hammering in gusty outbreaks a mile away on either hand, but nothing came of it I saw a crowd of them upon the slopes, looking furtively at me At last, hot and tired I sat down to watch the place But I was too restless to watch long, I am too Occidental for a long vigil I could work at a problem for years but to wait inactive for twenty four hours—that is another matter

"I got up after a time, and began walking aimlessly through the bushes towards the hill again Patience,' said I to myself If you want your machine again you must leave that sphinx alone If they mean to take your machine away, it's little good your wrecking their bronze panels and if they don't you will get it back as soon as you can ask for it To sit among all

those unknown things before a puzzle like that is hopeless That way lies monomania Face this world Learn its ways, watch it, be careful of too hasty guesses at its meaning In the end you will find clues to it all' Then suddenly the humour of the situation came into my mind the thought of the years I had spent in study and toil to get into the future age, and now my passion of anxiety to get out of it I had made myself the most complicated and the most hopeless trap that ever a man devised Although it was at my own expense, I could not help myself I laughed aloud

"Going through the big palace, it seemed to me that the little people avoided me It may have been my fancy, or it may have had something to do with my hammering at the gates of bronze Yet I felt tolerably sure of the avoidance I was careful, however, to show no concern and to abstain from any pursuit of them, and in the course of a day or two things got back to the old footing I made what progress I could in the language and in addition I pushed my explorations here and there Either I missed some subtle point or their language was excessively simple—almost exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs There seemed to be few, if any abstract terms, or little use of figurative language Their sentences were usually simple and of two words and I failed to convey or understand any but the simplest propositions I determined to put the thought of my Time Machine and the mystery of the bronze doors under the sphinx as much as possible in a corner of memory, until my growing knowledge would lead me back to them in a natural way Yet a certain feeling, you may understand tethered me in a circle of a few miles round the point of my arrival

"So far as I could see, all the world displayed the same exuberant richness as the Thames valley From every hill I climbed I saw the same abundance of splendid buildings, endlessly varied in material and

style, the same clustering thickets of evergreens, the same blossom laden trees and tree ferns Here and there water shone like silver, and beyond, the land rose into blue undulating hills, and so faded into the serenity of the sky A peculiar feature, which presently attracted my attention, was the presence of certain circular wells, several, as it seemed to me, of a very great depth One lay by the path up the hill, which I had followed during my first walk Like the others, it was rimmed with bronze, curiously wrought, and protected by a little cupola from the rain Sitting by the side of these wells, and peering down into the shafted darkness, I could see no gleam of water, nor could I start any reflection with a lighted match But in all of them I heard a certain sound a thud—thud—thud, like the beating of some big engine, and I discovered, from the flaring of my matches, that a steady current of air set down the shafts Further, I threw a scrap of paper into the throat of one, and, instead of fluttering slowly down, it was at once sucked swiftly out of sight

"After a time, too, I came to connect these wells with tall towers standing here and there upon the slopes, for above them there was often just such a flicker in the air as one sees on a hot day above a sun-scorched beach Putting things together, I reached a strong suggestion of an extensive system of subterranean ventilation, whose true import it was difficult to imagine I was at first inclined to associate it with the sanitary apparatus of these people It was an obvious conclusion, but it was absolutely wrong

"And here I must admit that I learned very little of drains and bells and modes of conveyance, and the like conveniences, during my time in this real future In some of these visions of Utopias and coming times which I have read, there is a vast amount of detail about building, and social arrangements, and so forth But while such details are easy enough to obtain when

the whole world is contained in one's imagination, they are altogether inaccessible to a real traveller amid such realities as I found here Conceive the tale of London which a negro fresh from Central Africa, would take back to his tribe! What would he know of railway companies, of social movements, of telephone and telegraph wires of the Parcels Delivery Company, and postal orders and the like? Yet we, at least, should be willing enough to explain these things to him! And even of what he knew how much could he make his untravelled friend either apprehend or believe? Then, think how narrow the gap between a negro and a white man of our own times and how wide the interval between myself and these of the Golden Age! I was sensible of much which was unseen, and which contributed to my comfort but save for a general impression of automatic organisation I fear I can convey very little of the difference to your mind

"In the matter of sepulture for instance I could see no signs of crematoria nor anything suggestive of tombs But it occurred to me that, possibly there might be cemeteries (or crematoria) somewhere beyond the range of my explorings This again, was a question I deliberately put to myself and my curiosity was at first entirely defeated upon the point The thing puzzled me and I was led to make a further remark which puzzled me still more that aged and infirm among this people there were none

"I must confess that my satisfaction with my first theories of an automatic civilisation and a decadent humanity did not long endure Yet I could think of no other Let me put my difficulties The several big palaces I had explored were mere living places, great dining halls and sleeping apartments I could find no machinery no appliances of any kind Yet these people were clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need renewal and their sandals, though undecorated were fairly complex specimens of metal

work Somehow such things must be made And the little people displayed no vestige of a creative tendency There were no shops, no workshops, no sign of importations among them They spent all their time in playing gently, in bathing in the river, in making love in a half playful fashion, in eating fruit and sleeping I could not see how things were kept going

"Then, again, about the Time Machine something, I knew not what had taken it into the hollow pedestal of the White Sphinx *Why?* For the life of me I could not imagine Those waterless wells, too, those flickering pillars I felt I lacked a clue I felt —how shall I put it? Suppose you found an inscription, with sentences here and there in excellent plain English, and interpolated therewith, others made up of words, of letters even, absolutely unknown to you? Well, on the third day of my visit, that was how the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One presented itself to me!

"That day, too, I made a friend—of a sort. It happened that, as I was watching some of the little people bathing in a shallow, one of them was seized with cramp and began drifting downstream The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too strongly for even a moderate swimmer It will give you an idea, therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures, when I tell you that none made the slightest attempt to rescue the weakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes When I realised this, I hurriedly slipped off my clothes, and, wading in at a point lower down, I caught the poor mite and drew her safe to land A little rubbing of the limbs soon brought her round, and I had the satisfaction of seeing she was all right before I left her I had got to such a low estimate of her kind that I did not expect any gratitude from her In that, however, I was wrong

"This happened in the morning In the afternoon

I met my little woman, as I believe it was, as I was returning towards my centre from an exploration, and she received me with cries of delight and presented me with a big garland of flowers—evidently made for me and me alone The thing took my imagination Very possibly I had been feeling desolate At any rate I did my best to display my appreciation of the gift We were soon seated together in a little stone arbour, engaged in conversation, chiefly of smiles The creature's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's might have done We passed each other flowers, and she kissed my hands I did the same to hers Then I tried talk, and found that her name was Weena, which, though I don't know what it meant, somehow seemed appropriate enough That was the beginning of a queer friendship which lasted a week, and ended—as I will tell you!

"She was exactly like a child She wanted to be with me always She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down, and leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me rather plaintively But the problems of the world had to be mastered I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry on a miniature flirtation Yet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion Never theless she was, somehow, a very great comfort I thought it was mere childish affection that made her cling to me Until it was too late, I did not clearly know what I had inflicted upon her when I left her Nor until it was too late did I clearly understand what she was to me For, by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak futile way that she cared for me, the little doll of a creature presently gave my return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the feeling of coming home, and I would watch for her

tiny fi re of white and gold so soon as I came over the h ll

It was from her too that I learned that fear had not yet left the ld Sle as fearless eno gh in the davl ght and sl e had th oddest conf lence n me for once n a fool sh m nent I made threa en ng grimaces at her an l sl e s n plv la ghe l at them But she drea led the dark d ea le l shado s lreade l black th ngs Darkness to her was the ne h ng lreadful It was a s ng larly p s na e en n and it set me thinking and obse ng I d s e e l then among other things that tl ese l tle p ple gatl ered nto the great ho ses af er dark an l slept n d oves To enter upon tl em w l t a l ght was to p t them nto a tumult of app ehens on I ne er fo nd one o t of d ors or one eep ng alone w l n loors af er dark Yet I was s ll such a b ck ead tha I m s e l the les on of that fear and in sp te of Weena s l tress I ins s ed upon sleep no a vay fro n these sl mber ng m l des

I tro l le l her grea ly b t n the end her odd affect on for me tr phe l and for five of the n gl ts of our acq a ntan e n l l ng he last n ght of all she slept w th her head p llo e l on my arm But my story sl ps av ay from me as I speak of her It m st have been the n gl t before her resc e that I was awakened abo t dawn I had been restless d eam ng most d sagreeably that I was drowned and tha sea ane nones were feel ng over my face v h the r soft palps I woke w th a start and w h an odd fancy that some grey sh an nal had j st r shed o t of the chamber I tr ed to get to sleep aga n but I felt restless and uncon fo able It was that d m grey ho r when th ngs are j s creep ng out of darkness when everyth ng s colo rless and clear c t and yet nreal I got p and vent down nto the g eat hall and so out upon the flagstones in front of the palace I tho ght I wo ld make a v rt e f necess y and see the s nr se

"The moon was sett ng and the dy ng moonl ght

I met my little woman, as I believe it was, as I was returning towards my centre from an exploration, and she received me with cries of delight and presented me with a big garland of flowers—evidently made for me and me alone. The thing took my imagination Very possibly I had been feeling desolate At any rate I did my best to display my appreciati n of the gift We were soon seated together in a little stone arbour, engaged in conversation, chiefly of smiles The creature's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's might have done We passed each other flowers and she kissed my hands I did the same to hers Then I tried talk, and found that her name was Weena, which, though I don't know what it meant, somehow seemed appropriate enough That was the beginning of a queer friendship which lasted a week, and ended—as I will tell you!

"She was exactly like a child She wanted to be with me always She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down, and leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me rather plaintively But the problems of the world had to be mastered I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry on a miniature flirtation Yet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion Nevertheless she was, somehow a very great comfort I thought it was mere childish affection that made her cling to me Until it was too late, I did not clearly know what I had inflicted upon her when I left her Nor until it was too late did I clearly understand what she was to me For, by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak, futile way that she cared for me, the little doll of a creature presently gave my return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the feeling of coming home, and I would watch for her

was hidden down there at the foot of that [illegible] sat upon [illegible] the well telling myself [illegible] any rate, there was nothing to fear, and that [illegible] must descend [illegible] the solution of my difficulties [illegible] withal I was [illegible] utely afraid to go! As I [illegible] two of the be[illegible] upper world people came [illegible] in their am[illegible] sport across the daylight [illegible] shadow The [illegible] ale pursued the female, [illegible] flowers at her [illegible] ran

"'They seemed [illegible] tressed to find me, my [illegible] the overturned pillar peering down the [illegible] parently it was considered bad form to [illegible] apertures for which I pointed to this one, and [illegible] frame a question about it in their tongue, [illegible] still more visibly distressed and turned away [illegible] were interested by my matches, and I [illegible] amuse them I tried them again about the [illegible] again I failed So presently I left them [illegible] go back to Weena and see what I could [illegible] But my mind was already in revolution, [illegible] impressions were slipping and sliding to [illegible] ment I had now a clue to the import of [illegible] to the ventilating towers, to the mystery of [illegible] to say nothing of a hint at the meaning of [illegible] gates and the fate of the Time Machine [illegible] vaguely there came a suggestion towards [illegible] the economic problem that had puzzled [illegible]

"Here was the new view Plain[illegible] species of Man was subterranean [illegible] circumstances in particular which made [illegible] its rare emergence above ground was the [illegible] long-continued underground habit [illegible] there was the bleached look common [illegible] that live largely in the dark—the [illegible] Kentucky caves for instance Then [illegible] with that capacity for reflecting [illegible] features of nocturnal things—witness [illegible] and the cat And last of all, that evident [illegible] in the

sunshine, that hasty yet fumbling and awkward flight towards dark shadow, and that peculiar carriage of the head while in the light—all reinforced the theory of an extreme sensitiveness of the retina

"Beneath my feet, then, the earth must be tunnelled enormously, and these tunnellings were the habitat of the new race The presence of ventilating shafts and wells along the hill slopes—everywhere, in fact, except along the river valley—showed how universal were its ramifications What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial underworld that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done? The notion was so plausible that I at once accepted it, and went on to assume the how of this splitting of the human species I dare say you will anticipate the shape of my theory though for myself, I very soon felt that it fell far short of the truth

"At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position No doubt it will seem grotesque enough to you—and wildly incredible!—and yet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way There is a tendency to utilise underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilisation, there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are subways there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply Evidently, I thought, this tendency had increased till Industry had gradually lost its birthright in the sky I mean that it had gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground factories spending a still increasing amount of its time therein till in the end—! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artifical conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?

"Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people—due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor—is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion And this same widening gulf—which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich—will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification less and less frequent So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves pursuing pleasure and comfort and beauty and below ground the Have nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour Once they were there, they would no doubt have to pay rent and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns and if they refused they would starve or be suffocated for arrears Such of them as were so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious would die and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors would become as well adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their way, as the Upper world people were to theirs As it seemed to me, the refined beauty and the etiolated pallor followed naturally enough

"The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a different shape in my mind It had been no such triumph of moral education and general co operation as I had imagined Instead I saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of to-day Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow man This, I must warn you, was my theory at the

time I had no convenient cicerone in the pattern of the Utopian books My explanation may be absolutely wrong I still think it is the most plausible one But even on this supposition the balanced civilisation that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now far fallen into decay Th- too-perfect security of the Upper worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence That I could see clearly enough already What had happened to the Undergrounders I did not yet suspect, but from what I had seen of the Morlocks—that, by the bye, was the name by which these creatures were called—I could imagine that the modification of the human type was even far more profound than among the 'Eloi,' the beautiful race that I already knew

"Then came troublesome doubts Why had the Morlocks taken my Time Machine? For I felt sure it was they who had taken it Why, too, if the Eloi were masters, could they not restore the machine to me? And why were they so terribly afraid of the dark? I proceeded, as I have said, to question Weena about this Underworld, but here again I was disap pointed At first she would not understand my ques tions, and presently she refused to answer them She shivered as though the topic was unendurable And when I pressed her, perhaps a little harshly, she burst into tears They were the only tears, except my own, I ever saw in that Golden Age When I saw them I ceased abruptly to trouble about the Morlocks, and was only concerned in banishing these signs of the human inheritance from Weena's eyes And very soon she was smiling and clapping her hands, while I solemnly burned a match.

§ 6

"It may seem odd to you, but it was two days before I could follow up the new found clue in what was manifestly the proper way I felt a peculiar shrinking from those pallid bodies They were just the half-bleached colour of the worms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum And they were filthily cold to the touch Probably my shrinking was largely due to the sympathetic influence of the Eloi, whose disgust of the Morlocks I now began to appreciate

"The next night I did not sleep well Probably my health was a little disordered I was oppressed with perplexity and doubt Once or twice I had a feeling of intense fear for which I could perceive no definite reason I remember creeping noiselessly into the great hall where the little people were sleeping in the moonlight—that night Weena was among them—and feeling reassured by their presence It occurred to me even then, that in the course of a few days the moon must pass through its last quarter, and the nights grow dark, when the appearances of these unpleasant creatures from below, these whitened Lemurs, this new vermin that had replaced the old might be more abundant *And on both these days I had the restless feeling of* one who shirks an inevitable duty I felt assured that the Time Machine was only to be recovered by boldly penetrating these underground mysteries Yet I could not face the mystery If only I had had a companion it would have been different But I was so horribly alone, and even to clamber down into the darkness of the well appalled me I don't know if you will understand my feeling, but I never felt quite safe at my back

"It was this restlessness, this insecurity, perhaps, that drove me further and further afield in my exploring

expeditions Going to the south westward towards the rising country that is now called Combe Wood, I observed far off, in the direction of nineteenth century Banstead, a vast green structure, different in character from any I had hitherto seen It was larger than the largest of the palaces or ruins I knew, and the façade had an Oriental look the face of it having the lustre, as well as the pale green tint, a kind of bluish green, of a certain type of Chinese porcelain This difference in aspect suggested a difference in use, and I was minded to push on and explore But the day was growing late, and I had come upon the sight of the place after a long and tiring circuit, so I resolved to hold over the adventure for the following day, and I returned to the welcome and the caresses of little Weena But next morning I perceived clearly enough that my curiosity regarding the Palace of Green Porcelain was a piece of self deception, to enable me to shirk, by another day, an experience I dreaded I resolved I would make the descent without further waste of time, and started out in the early morning towards a well near the ruins of granite and aluminium

"Little Weena ran with me She danced beside me to the well, but when she saw me lean over the mouth and look downward she seemed strangely disconcerted 'Good bye, little Weena,' I said, kissing her, and then, putting her down I began to feel over the parapet for the climbing hooks Rather hastily, I may as well confess, for I feared my courage might leak away! At first she watched me in amazement Then she gave a most piteous cry and running to me, she began to pull at me with her little hands I think her opposition nerved me rather to proceed I shook her off, perhaps a little roughly and in another moment I was in the throat of the well I saw her agonised face over the parapet and smiled to reassure her Then I had to look down at the unstable hooks to which I clung

"I had to clamber down a shaft of perhaps two

hundred yards. The descent was effected by means of metallic bars projecting from the sides of the well, and these being adapted to the needs of a creature much smaller and lighter than myself, I was speedily cramped and fatigued by the descent. And not simply fatigued! One of the bars bent suddenly under my weight, and almost swung me off into the blackness beneath. For a moment I hung by one hand, and after that experience I did not dare to rest again. Though my arms and back were presently acutely painful, I went on clambering down the sheer descent with as quick a motion as possible. Glancing upward, I saw the aperture, a small blue disk, in which a star was visible, while little Weena's head showed as a round black projection. The thudding sound of a machine below grew louder and more oppressive. Everything save that little disk above was profoundly dark, and when I looked up again Weena had disappeared.

"I was in an agony of discomfort. I had some thought of trying to go up the shaft again, and leave the Underworld alone. But even while I turned this over in my mind I continued to descend. At last, with intense relief, I saw dimly coming up, a foot to the right of me, a slender loophole in the wall. Swinging myself in, I found it was the aperture of a narrow horizontal tunnel in which I could lie down and rest. It was not too soon. My arms ached, my back was cramped, and I was trembling with the prolonged terror of a fall. Besides this, the unbroken darkness had had a distressing effect upon my eyes. The air was full of the throb and hum of machinery pumping air down the shaft.

"I do not know how long I lay. I was roused by a soft hand touching my face. Starting up in the darkness I snatched at my matches and, hastily striking one, I saw three stooping white creatures similar to the one I had seen above ground in the ruin, hastily retreating before the light. Living, as they did, in what ap-

peared to me impenetrable darkness their eyes were abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way I have no doubt they could see me in that rayless obscurity, and they did not seem to have any fear of me apart from the light But, so soon as I struck a match in order to see them, they fled incon tinently, vanishing into dark gutters and tunnels, from which their eyes glared at me in the strangest fashion

"I tried to call to them, but the language they had was apparently different from that of the Overworld people, so that I was needs left to my own unaided efforts, and the thought of flight before exploration was even then in my mind But I said to myself, 'You are in for it now,' and, feeling my way along the tunnel, I found the noise of machinery grow louder Presently the walls fell away from me, and I came to a large open space, and, striking another match, saw that I had entered a vast arched cavern, which stretched into utter darkness beyond the range of my light The view I had of it was as much as one could see in the burning of a match

"Necessarily my memory is vague Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque black shadows, in which dim spectral Mor locks sheltered from the glare The place, by the bye, was very stuffy and oppressive, and the faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air Some way down the central vista was a little table of white metal, laid with what seemed a meal The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! Even at the time, I remember wonder ing what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw It was all very indistinct the heavy smell the big unmeaning shapes the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only waiting for the darkness to come at me again! Then the match burned down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot in the blackness

"I have thought since how particularly ill equipped I was for such an experience When I had started with the Time Machine, I had started with the absurd assumption that the men of the Future would certainly be infinitely ahead of ourselves in all their appliances I had come without arms, without medicine, without anything to smoke—at times I missed tobacco frightfully—even without enough matches If only I had thought of a Kodak! I could have flashed that glimpse of the underworld in a second, and examined it at leisure. But, as it was, I stood there with only the weapons and the powers that Nature had endowed me with—hands, feet, and teeth these, and four safety matches that still remained to me

"I was afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in the dark, and it was only with my last glimpse of light I discovered that my store of matches had run low It had never occurred to me until that moment that there was any need to economise them, and I had wasted almost half the box in astonishing the Upper worlders, to whom fire was a novelty Now, as I say, I had four left, and while I stood in the dark, a hand touched mine, lank fingers came feeling over my face, and I was sensible of a peculiar unpleasant odour I fancied I heard the breathing of a crowd of those dreadful little beings about me I felt the box of matches in my hand being gently disengaged, and other hands behind me plucking at my clothing The sense of these unseen creatures examining me was indescribably unpleasant The sudden realisation of my ignorance of their ways of thinking and doing came home to me very vividly in the darkness I shouted at them as loudly as I could They started away, and then I could feel them approaching me again They clutched at me more boldly, whispering odd sounds to each other I shivered violently, and shouted again—rather discordantly This time they were not so seriously alarmed, and they made a queer laughing noise

as they came back at me I will confess I was horribly frightened I determined to strike another match and escape under the protection of its glare I did so, and eking out the flicker with a scrap of paper from my pocket, I made good my retreat to the narrow tunnel But I had scarce entered this when my light was blown out, and in the blackness I could hear the Morlocks rustling like wind among leaves, and pattering like the rain, as they hurried after me

"In a moment I was clutched by several hands, and there was no mistaking that they were trying to haul me back I struck another light, and waved it in their dazzled faces You can scarce imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked—those pale, chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish grey eyes!—as they stared in their blindness and bewilderment • But I did not stay to look, I promise you I retreated again, and when my second match had ended, I struck my third It had almost burned through when I reached the opening into the shaft I lay down on the edge, for the throb of the great pump below made me giddy Then I felt sideways for the projecting hooks, and, as I did so my feet were grasped from behind and I was violently tugged backward I lit my last match and it incontinently went out But I had my hand on the climbing bars now, and, kicking violently, I disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks and was speedily clambering up the shaft while they stayed peering and blinking up at me all but one little wretch who followed me for some way, and well nigh secured my boot as a trophy

"That climb seemed interminable to me With the last twenty or thirty feet of it a deadly nausea came upon me I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my hold The last few yards was a frightful struggle against this faintness Several times my head swam, and I felt all the sensations of falling At last, however, I got over the well mouth somehow, and staggered out

of the ruin into the blinding sunlight I fell upon my face Even the soil smelt sweet and clean Then I remember Weena kissing my hands and ears, and the voices of others among the Eloi Then, for a time, I was insensible

§ 7

"Now, indeed, I seemed in a worse case than before Hitherto, except during my night's anguish at the loss of the Time Machine, I had felt a sustaining hope of ultimate escape, but that hope was staggered by these new discoveries Hitherto I had merely thought myself impeded by the childish simplicity of the little people, and by some unknown forces which I had only to understand to overcome but there was an altogether new element in the sickening quality of the Morlocks—a something inhuman and malign Instinctively I loathed them Before, I had felt as a man might feel who had fallen into a pit my concern was with the pit and how to get out of it Now I felt like a beast in a trap, whose enemy would come upon him soon

"The enemy I dreaded may surprise you It was the darkness of the new moon Weena had put this into my head by some at first incomprehensible remarks about the Dark Nights It was not now such a very difficult problem to guess what the coming Dark Nights might mean The moon was on the wane each night there was a longer interval of darkness And I now understood to some slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little Upper world people for the dark I wondered vaguely what foul villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon I felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis was all wrong The Upper world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants, but that had long since passed away The two species that had resulted from the

evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carlovingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylit surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or as a man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back—changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson anew. They were becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the Under-world. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time.

"Still, however helpless the little people in the presence of their mysterious Fear, I was differently constituted. I came out of this age of ours, this ripe prime of the human race, when Fear does not paralyse and mystery has lost its terrors. I at least would defend myself. Without further delay I determined to make myself arms and a fastness where I might sleep. With that refuge as a base, I could face this strange world with some of that confidence I had lost in realising to what creatures night by night I lay exposed. I felt I could never sleep again until my bed was secure from

them I shuddered with horror to think how they must already have examined me

"I wandered during the afternoon along the valley of the Thames, but found nothing that commended itself to my mind as inaccessible All the buildings and trees seemed easily practicable to such dexterous climbers as the Morlocks, to judge by their wells, must be Then the tall pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain and the polished gleam of its walls came back to my memory, and in the evening, taking Weena like a child upon my shoulder, I went up the hills towards the south west The distance, I had reckoned, was seven or eight miles, but it must have been nearer eighteen I had first seen the place on a moist afternoon when distances are deceptively diminished In addition, the heel of one of my shoes was loose, and a nail was working through the sole—they were comfortable old shoes I wore about indoors—so that I was lame And it was already long past sunset when I came in sight of the palace, silhouetted black against the pale yellow of the sky

"Weena had been hugely delighted when I began to carry her, but after a time she desired me to let her down, and ran along by the side of me, occasionally darting off on either hand to pick flowers to stick in my pockets My pockets had always puzzled Weena, but at the last she had concluded that they were an eccentric kind of vase for floral decoration At least she utilised them for that purpose And that reminds me! In changing my jacket I found "

The Time Traveller paused put his hand into his pocket and silently placed two withered flowers not unlike very large white mallows upon the little table Then he resumed his narrative

"As the hush of evening crept over the world and we proceeded over the hill crest towards Wimbledon, Weena grew tired and wanted to return to the house of grey stone But I pointed out the distant pinnacles

of the Palace of Green Porcelain to her, and contrived to make her understand that we were seeking a refuge there from her Fear You know that great pause that comes upon things before the dusk? Even the breeze stops in the trees To me there is always an air of expectation about that evening stillness The sky was clear, remote, and empty save for a few horizontal bars far down in the sunset Well, that night the expecta tion took the colour of my fears In that darkling calm my senses seemed preternaturally sharpened I fancied I could even feel the hollowness of the ground beneath my feet could, indeed, almost see through it the Mor locks on their ant hill going hither and thither and waiting for the dark In my excitement I fancied that they would receive my invasion of their burrows as a declaration of war And why had they taken my Time Machine?

"So we went on in the quiet, and the twilight deepened into night The clear blue of the distance faded, and one star after another came out The ground grew dim and the trees black Weena's fears and her fatigue grew upon her I took her in my arms and talked to her and caressed her Then, as the darkness grew deeper, she put her arms round my neck, and, closing her eyes tightly pressed her face against my shoulder So we went down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dimness I almost walked into a little river This I waded and went up the opposite side of the valley, past a number of sleeping houses, and by a statue—a Faun, or some such figure, *minus* the head Here too were acacias So far I had seen nothing of the Morlocks, but it was yet early in the night, and the darker hours before the old moon rose were still to come

"From the brow of the next hill I saw a thick wood spreading wide and black before me I hesitated at this I could see no end to it either to the right or the left Feeling tired—my feet in particular, were

very sore—I carefully lowered Weena from my shoulder as I halted, and sat down upon the turf I could no longer see the Palace of Green Porcelain, and I was in doubt of my direction I looked into the thickness of the wood and thought of what it might hide Under that dense tangle of branches one would be out of sight of the stars Even were there no other lurk ing danger—a danger I did not care to let my imagination loose upon—there would still be all the roots to stumble over and the tree boles to strike against

I was very tired, too, after the excitements of the day, so I decided that I would not face it, but would pass the night upon the open hill

"Weena, I was glad to find, was fast asleep I carefully wrapped her in my jacket, and sat down beside her to wait for the moonrise The hillside was quiet and deserted, but from the black of the wood there came now and then a stir of living things Above me shone the stars, for the night was very clear I felt a certain sense of friendly comfort in their twinkling All the old constellations had gone from the sky, how ever that slow movement which is imperceptible in a hundred human lifetimes, had long since rearranged them in unfamiliar groupings But the Milky Way, it seemed to me, was still the same tattered streamer of star dust as of yore Southward (as I judged it) was a very bright red star that was new to me, it was even more splendid than our own green Sirius And amid all these scintillating points of light one bright planet shone kindly and steadily like the face of an old friend

"Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed And during

these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions the complex organisations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence Instead were these frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry, and the white Things of which I went in terror Then I thought of the Great Fear that was between the two species, and for the first time, with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be Yet it was too horrible! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and starlike under the stars, and forthwith dismissed the thought

"Through that long night I held my mind off the Morlocks as well as I could, and whiled away the time by trying to fancy I could find signs of the old constellations in the new confusion The sky kept very clear, except for a hazy cloud or so No doubt I dozed at times Then, as my vigil wore on, came a faintness in the eastward sky, like the reflection of some colourless fire, and the old moon rose, thin and peaked and white And close behind, and overtaking it, and overflowing it, the dawn came, pale at first, and then growing pink and warm No Morlocks had approached us Indeed, I had seen none upon the hill that night And in the confidence of renewed day it almost seemed to me that my fear had been unreasonable I stood up and found my foot with the loose heel swollen at the ankle and painful under the heel, so I sat down again, took off my shoes, and flung them away

"I awakened Weena, and we went down into the wood, now green and pleasant instead of black and forbidding We found some fruit wherewith to break our fast We soon met others of the dainty ones, laughing and dancing in the sunlight as though there was no such thing in nature as the night And then I thought once more of the meat that I had seen I felt assured now of what it was, and from the bottom

of my heart I pitied this last feeble rill from the great flood of humanity Clearly, at some time in the Long Ago of human decay the Morlocks' food had run short Possibly they had lived on rats and suchlike vermin. Even now man is far less discriminating and exclusive in his food than he was—far less than any monkey His prejudice against human flesh is no deep seated instinct And so these inhuman sons of men—! I tried to look at the thing in a scientific spirit After all, they were less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago And the intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment had gone Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of And there was Weena dancing at my side!

"Then I tried to preserve myself from the horror that was coming upon me by regarding it as a rigorous punishment of human selfishness Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fulness of time Necessity had come home to him I even tried a Carlyle like scorn of this *wretched aristocracy in decay* But this attitude of mind was impossible However great their intellectual degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation and their Fear

"I had at that time very vague ideas as to the course I should pursue My first was to secure some safe place of refuge, and to make myself such arms of metal or stone as I could contrive That necessity was immediate In the next place, I hoped to procure some means of fire, so that I should have the weapon of a torch at hand, for nothing, I knew would be more efficient against these Morlocks Then I wanted to

arrange some contrivance to break open the doors of bronze under the White Sphinx I had in mind a battering ram I had a persuasion that if I could enter those doors and carry a blaze of light before me I should discover the Time Machine and e cape I could not imagine the Morlocks were strong enough to move it far away Weena I had resolved to bring with me to our own time And turning such schemes over in my mind I pursued our way towards the building which my fancy had chosen as our dwelling

§ 8

"I found the Palace of Green Porcelain, when we approached it about noon deserted and falling into ruin Only ragged vestiges of glass remained in its windows, and great sheets of the green facing had fallen away from the corroded metallic framework It lay very high upon a turfy down, and looking north eastward before I entered it, I was surprised to see a large estuary, or even creek, where I judged Wands worth and Battersea must once have been I thought then—though I never followed up the thought—of what might have happened, or might be happening, to the living things in the sea

"The material of the Palace proved on examination to be indeed porcelain, and along the face of it I saw an inscription in some unknown character I thought, rather foolishly that Weena might help me to inter pret this, but I only learned that the bare idea of writing had never entered her head She always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she was, perhaps because her affection was so human

"Within the big valves of the door—which were open and broken—we found instead of the customary hall, a long gallery lit by many side windows At the first glance I was reminded of a museum The tiled

floor was thick with dust, and a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects was shrouded in the same grey covering Then I perceived, standing strange and gaunt in the centre of the hall, what was clearly the lower part of a huge skeleton I recognised by the oblique feet that it was some extinct creature after the fashion of the Megatherium The skull and the upper bones lay beside it in the thick dust, and in one place, where rain water had dropped through a leak in the roof, the thing itself had been worn away Further in the gallery was the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus My museum hypothesis was confirmed Going towards the side I found what appeared to be sloping shelves, and, clearing away the thick dust, I found the old familiar glass cases of our own time But they must have been air tight to judge from the fair preservation of some of their contents

"Clearly we stood among the ruins of some latter day South Kensington! Here, apparently, was the Palæontological Section, and a very splendid array of fossils it must have been, though the inevitable process of decay that had been staved off for a time, and had, through the extinction of bacteria and fungi, lost ninety nine hundredths of its force, was nevertheless, with extreme sureness if with extreme slowness at work again upon all its treasures Here and there I found traces of the little people in the shape of rare fossils broken to pieces or threaded in strings upon reeds And the cases had in some instances been bodily removed—by the Morlocks as I judged The place was very silent The thick dust deadened our foot steps Weena, who had been rolling a sea urchin down the sloping glass of a case presently came, as I stared about me, and very quietly took my hand and stood beside me

"And at first I was so much surprised by this ancient monument of an intellectual age, that I gave no thought to the possibilities it presented Even my preoccupa

tion about the Time Machine receded a little from my mind

"To judge from the size ot the place this Palace of Green Porcelain had a great deal more in it than a Gallery of Palæontology, possibly historical galleries, it might be, even a library! To me, at least in my present circumstances these would be vastly more interesting than this spectacle of old time geology in decay Exploring, I found another short gallery running transversely to the first This appeared to be devoted to minerals, and the sight of a block of sulphur set my mind running on gunpowder But I could find no saltpetre indeed, no nitrates of any kind Doubtless they had del quesced ages ago Yet the sulphur hung in my mind, and set up a train of thinking As for the rest of the contents of that gallery, though on the whole they were the best preserved of all I saw, I had little interest I am no specialist in mineralogy and I went on down a very ruinous aisle running parallel to the first hall I had entered Apparently this section had been devoted to natural history, but everything had long since passed out of recognition A few shrivelled and blackened vestiges of what had once been stuffed animals, desiccated mummies in jars that had once held spirit, a brown dust of departed plants that was all! I was sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the patent readjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained Then we came to a gallery of simply colossal proportions but singularly ill lit, the floor of it running downward at a slight angle from the end at which I entered. At intervals white globes hung from the ceiling—many of them cracked and smashed—which suggested that originally the place had been artificially lit Here I was more in my element for rising on either side of me were the huge bulks of big machines, all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly complete You know I have a

certain weakness for mechanism, and I was inclined to linger among these, the more so as for the most part they had the interest of puzzles, and I could make only the vaguest guesses at what they were for. I fancied that if I could solve their puzzles I should find myself in possession of powers that might be of use against the Morlocks.

"Suddenly Weena came very close to my side. So suddenly that she startled me. Had it not been for her I do not think I should have noticed that the floor of the gallery sloped at all.* The end I had come in at was quite above ground, and was lit by rare slit-like windows. As you went down the length, the ground came up against these windows, until at last there was a pit like the 'area' of a London house before each, and only a narrow line of daylight at the top. I went slowly along, puzzling about the machines, and had been too intent upon them to notice the gradual diminution of the light, until Weena's increasing apprehensions drew my attention. Then I saw that the gallery ran down at last into a thick darkness. I hesitated, and then, as I looked round me, I saw that the dust was less abundant and its surface less even. Farther away towards the dimness, it appeared to be broken by a number of small narrow footprints. My sense of the immediate presence of the Morlocks revived at that. I felt that I was wasting my time in the academic examination of machinery. I called to mind that it was already far advanced in the afternoon, and that I had still no weapon, no refuge, and no means of making a fire. And then down in the remote blackness of the gallery I heard a peculiar pattering, and the same odd noises I had heard down the well.

"I took Weena's hand. Then, struck with a sudden idea, I left her and turned to a machine from which projected a lever not unlike those in a signal-box.

* It may be, of course, that the floor did not slope, but that the museum was built into the side of a hill.—ED.

rocket As I returned, I passed again across that minute when she traversed the laboratory But now her every motion appeared to be the exact inversion of her previous ones The door at the lower end opened and she glided quietly up the laboratory, back foremost and disappeared behind the door by which she had previously entered Just before that I seemed to see Hillyer for a moment but he passed like a flash

"Then I stopped the machine, and saw about me again the old familiar laboratory, my tools, my appliances just as I had left them I got off the thing very shakily, and sat down upon my bench For several minutes I trembled violently Then I became calmer Around me was my old workshop again, exactly as it had been I might have slept there, and the whole thing have been a dream

"And yet, not exactly! The thing had started from the south east corner of the laboratory It had come to rest again in the north west, against the wall where you saw it That gives you the exact distance from my little lawn to the pedestal of the White Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine.

"For a time my brain went stagnant Presently I got up and came through the passage here, limping because my heel was still painful, and feeling sorely begrimed I saw the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the table by the door I found the date was indeed to-day, and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour was almost eight o'clock I heard your voices and the clatter of plates I hesitated—I felt so sick and weak Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, and opened the door on you You know the rest I washed, and dined, and now I am telling you the story"

"I know," he said, after a pause, "that all this will be absolutely incredible to you T[illegible] one incredible thing is that I am here to[illegible] old familiar room looking into your frien[illegible] telling you these strange adventures"

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Clambering upon the stand, and grasping this lever in my hands, I put all my weight upon it sideways Suddenly Weena, deserted in the central aisle, began to whimper I had judged the strength of the lever pretty correctly, for it snapped after a minute's strain, and I rejoined her with a mace in my hand more than sufficient, I judged, for any Morlock skull I might encounter And I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one's own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things Only my disinclination to leave Weena, and a persuasion that if I began to slake my thirst for murder my Time Machine might suffer, restrained me from going straight down the gallery and killing the brutes I heard

"Well, mace in one hand and Weena in the other, I went out of that gallery and into another and still larger one which at the first glance reminded me of a military chapel hung with tattered flags The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of it, I presently recognised as the decaying vestiges of books They had long since dropped to pieces, and every semblance of print had left them But here and there were warped boards and cracked metallic clasps that told the tale well enough Had I been a literary man I might, perhaps, have moralised upon the futility of all

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Philosophical Transactions and my own seventeen papers upon physical optics

"Then, going up a broad staircase we came to what may once have been a gallery of technical chemistry And here I had not a little hope of useful discoveries Except at one end where the roof had collapsed, this gallery was well preserved I went eagerly to every unbroken case And at last, in one of the really air-

tight cases, I found a box of matches. Very eagerly I tried them. They were perfectly good. They were not even damp. I turned to Weena. 'Dance,' I cried to her in her own tongue. For now I had a weapon indeed against the horrible creatures we feared. And so, in that derelict museum, upon the thick soft carpeting of dust, to Weena's huge delight, I solemnly performed a kind of composite dance, whistling *The Land of the Leal* as cheerfully as I could. In part it was a modest *cancan*, in part a step dance, in part a skirt-dance (so far as my tail-coat permitted), and in part original. For I am naturally inventive, as you know.

"Now, I still think that for this box of matches to have escaped the wear of time for immemorial years was a most strange, as for me it was a most fortunate thing. *Yet, oddly enough, I found a far unlikelier* substance, and that was camphor. I found it in a sealed jar, that by chance, I suppose, had been really hermetically sealed. I fancied at first that it was paraffin wax, and smashed the glass accordingly. But the odour of camphor was unmistakable. In the universal decay this volatile substance had chanced to survive, *perhaps through many thousands of centuries. It re*minded me of a sepia painting I had once seen done from the ink of a fossil Belemnite that must have perished and become fossilised millions of years ago. I was about to throw it away, but I remembered that it was inflammable and burned with a good bright flame—was, in fact, an excellent candle—and I put it in my pocket. *I found no explosives, however, nor any means* of breaking down the bronze doors. As yet my iron crowbar was the most helpful thing I had chanced upon. Nevertheless I left that gallery greatly elated.

"I cannot tell you all the story of that long afternoon. It would require a great effort of memory to recall my explorations in at all the proper order. I remember a long gallery of rusting stands *of arms, and* how I hesitated between my crowbar and a hatchet or

a sword I could not carry both, however, and my bar of iron promised best against the bronze gates There were numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles The most were masses of rust, but many were of some new metal, and still fairly sound But any cartridges or powder there may once have been had rotted into dust One corner I saw was charred and shattered perhaps, I thought, by an explosion among the specimens In another place was a vast array of idols– Polynesian, Mexican, Grecian, Phœnician, every country on earth I should think And here, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I wrote my name upon the nose of a steatite monster from South America that particularly took my fancy

"As the evening drew on, my interest waned I went through gallery after gallery, dusty silent, often ruinous, the exhibits sometimes mere heaps of rust and lignite, sometimes fresher In one place I suddenly found myself near the model of a tin mine, and then by the merest accident I discovered in an air tight case, two dynamite cartridges[1] I shouted 'Eureka,' and smashed the case with joy Then came a doubt I hesitated Then, selecting a little side gallery, I made my essay I never felt such a disappointment as I did in waiting five, ten fifteen minutes for an ex plosion that never came Of course the things were dummies as I might have guessed from their presence I really believe that, had they not been so I should have rushed off incontinently and blown Sphinx, bronze doors, and (as it proved) my chances of finding the Time Machine, all together into non existence

"It was after that, I think, that we came to a little open court within the palace It was turfed and had three fruit trees So we rested and refreshed ourselves Towards sunset I began to consider our position Night was creeping upon us, and my inaccessible hiding place had still to be found But that troubled me very little now I had in my possession a thing that was, perhaps,

the best of all defences against the Morlocks—I had matches! I had the camphor in my pocket, too, if a blaze were needed. It seemed to me that the best thing we could do would be to pass the night in the open, *protected by a fire.* In the *morning there was* the getting of the Time Machine. Towards that, as yet, I had only my iron mace. But now, with my growing knowledge, I felt very differently towards those bronze doors. Up to this I had refrained from forcing them, largely because of the mystery on the other side. They had never impressed me as being very strong, and I hoped to find my bar of iron not altogether inadequate for the work.

§ 9

"We emerged from the palace while the sun was still in part above the horizon. I was determined to reach the White Sphinx early the next morning, and ere the dusk I purposed pushing through the woods that had stopped me on the previous journey. My plan was to go as far as possible that night, and then building a fire, to sleep in the protection of its glare. *Accordingly, as we went along I gathered any sticks or* dried grass I saw, and presently had my arms full of such litter. Thus loaded, our progress was slower than I had anticipated, and besides Weena was tired. And I began to suffer from sleepiness too, so that it was full night before we reached the wood. Upon the shrubby hill of its edge Weena would have stopped, fearing the darkness before us; but a singular sense of impending calamity, that should indeed have served me as a warning, drove me onward. I had been without sleep for a night and two days, and I was feverish and irritable. I felt sleep coming upon me, and the Morlocks with it.

"While we hesitated, among the black bushes behind us, and dim against their blackness, I saw three crouching figures. There was scrub and long grass all about

a sword I could not carry both, however, and my bar of iron promised best against the bronze gates There were numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles The most were masses of rust, but many were of some new metal, and still fairly sound But any cartridges or powder there may once have been had rotted into dust One corner I saw was charred and shattered, perhaps, I thought, by an explosion among the specimens In another place was a vast array of idols— Polynesian, Mexican, Grecian, Phœnician, every country on earth I should think And here, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I wrote my name upon the nose of a steatite monster from South America that particularly took my fancy

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hastily felt in my pocket for the match box, and—it had gone! Then they gripped and closed with me again. In a moment I knew what had happened. I had slept and my fire had gone out, and the bitterness of death came over my soul. The forest seemed full of the smell of burning wood. I was caught by the neck, by the hair, by the arms, and pulled down. It was indescribably horrible in the darkness to feel all these soft creatures heaped upon me. I felt as if I was in a monstrous spider's web. I was overpowered, and went down. I felt little teeth nipping at my neck. I rolled over, and as I did so my hand came against my iron lever. It gave me strength. I struggled up, shaking the human rats from me, and, holding the bar short, I thrust where I judged their faces might be. I could feel the succulent giving of flesh and bone under my blows, and for a moment I was free.

"The strange exultation that so often seems to accompany hard fighting came upon me. I knew that both I and Weena were lost, but I determined to make the Morlocks pay for their meat. I stood with my back to a tree, swinging the iron bar before me. The whole wood was full of the stir and cries of them. A minute passed. Their voices seemed to rise to a higher pitch of excitement, and their movements grew faster. Yet none came within reach. I stood glaring at the blackness. Then suddenly came hope. What if the Morlocks were afraid? And close on the heels of that came a strange thing. The darkness seemed to grow luminous. Very dimly I began to see the Morlocks about me—three battered at my feet—and then I recognised, with incredulous surprise, that the others were running, in an incessant stream, as it seemed, from behind me, and away through the wood in front. And their backs seemed no longer white, but reddish. As I stood agape, I saw a little red spark go drifting across a gap of starlight between the branches, and

abominations about me, but I contained myself The hillock, as I have said was a kind of island in the forest From its summit I could now make out through a haze of smoke the Palace of Green Porcelain, and from that I could get my bearings for the White Sphinx And so, leaving the remnant of these damned souls still going hither and thither and moaning, as the day grew clearer, I tied some grass about my feet and limped on across smoking ashes and among black stems, that still pulsated internally with fire, towards the hiding place of the Time Machine I walked slowly, for I was almost exhausted, as well as lame and I felt the intensest wretchedness for the horrible death of little Weena It seemed an overwhelming calamity Now, in this old familiar room, it is more like the sorrow of a dream than an actual loss But that morning it left me absolutely lonely again—terribly alone I began to think of this house of mine of this fireside of some of you, and with such thoughts came a longing that was pain

"But, as I walked over the smoking ashes under the bright morning sky, I made a discovery In my trouser pocket were still some loose matches The box must have leaked before it was lost

§ 10

"About eight or nine in the morning I came to the same seat of yellow metal from which I had viewed the world upon the evening of my arrival I thought of my hasty conclusions upon that evening and could not refrain from laughing bitterly at my confidence Here was the same beautiful scene, the same abundant foliage, the same splendid palaces and magnificent ruins, the same silver river running between its fertile banks The gay robes of the beautiful people moved hither and thither among the trees Some were bathing

in exactly the place where I had saved Weena, and that suddenly gave me a keen stab of pain And like blots upon the landscape rose the cupolas above the ways to the under world I understood now what all the beauty of the over world people covered Very pleasant was their day, as pleasant as the day of the cattle in the field Like the cattle they knew of no enemies and provided against no needs And their end was the same

"I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect had been It had committed suicide It had set itself steadfastly towards comfort and ease, a balanced society with security and permanency as its watchword it had attained its hopes—to come to this at last Once life and property must have reached almost absolute safety The rich had been assured of his wealth and comfort, the toiler assured of his life and work No doubt in that perfect world there had been no unemployed problem, no social question left unsolved And a great quiet had followed

"It is a law of nature we overlook that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change Only those animals partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers

So as I see it the Upper world man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness and the Under world to mere mechanical industry But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection—absolute permanency Apparently as time went on the feeding of the Under world however it was effected had become disjointed Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand years came back again, and she began below The Under world be of

in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little tho ght outside habit had probably retained perforce rather more initiative if less of every other human character, than the upper And when other meat failed them, they turned to what old habit had hitherto forbidden So I say I saw it in my last view of the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One It may be as wrong an explanation as mortal wit could invent It is how the thing shaped itself to me and as that I give it to you

"After the fatigues, excitements and terrors of the past days and in spite of my grief this seat and the tranquil view and the warm sunlight were very pleasant I was very tired and sleepy, and soon my theorising passed into dozing Catching myself at that I took my own hint, and spreading myself out upon the turf I had a long and refreshing sleep

"I awoke a little before sunsetting I now felt safe against being caught napping by the Morlocks, and stretching myself, I came on down the hill towards the White Sphinx I had my crowbar in one hand, and the other hand played with the matches in my pocket

"And now came a most unexpected thing As I approached the pedestal of the sphinx I found the bronze valves were open They had slid down into grooves

"At that I stopped short before them, hesitating to enter

"Within was a small apartment and on a raised place in the corner of this was the Time Machine I had the small levers in my pocket So here after all my elaborate preparations for the siege of the White Sphinx was a meek surrender I threw my iron bar away, almost sorry not to use it

"A sudden thought came into my head as I stooped towards the portal For once, at least, I grasped the

mental operations of the Morlocks. Suppressing a strong inclination to laugh, I stepped through the bronze frame and up to the Time Machine. I was surprised to find it had been carefully oiled and cleaned. I have suspected since that the Morlocks had even partially taken it to pieces while trying in their dim way to grasp its purpose.

"Now as I stood and examined it, finding a pleasure in the mere touch of the contrivance, the thing I had expected happened. The bronze panels suddenly slid up and struck the frame with a clang. I was in the dark—trapped. So the Morlocks thought. At that I chuckled gleefully.

"I could already hear their murmuring laughter as they came towards me. Very calmly I tried to strike the match. I had only to fix on the levers and depart then like a ghost. But I had overlooked one little thing. The matches were of that abominable kind that light only on the box.

"You may imagine how all my calm vanished. The little brutes were close upon me. One touched me. I made a sweeping blow in the dark at them with the levers, and began to scramble into the saddle of the machine. Then came one hand upon me and then another. Then I had simply to fight against their persistent fingers for my levers, and at the same time feel for the studs over which these fitted. Once, indeed, they almost got away from me. As it slipped from my hand I had to butt in the dark with my head—I could hear the Morlock's skull ring—to recover it. It was a nearer thing than the fight in the forest, I think, this last scramble.

"But at last the lever was fixed and pulled over. The clinging hands slipped from me. The darkness presently fell from my eyes. I found myself in the same grey light and tumult I have already described.

§ 11

"I have already told you of the sickness and confusion that comes with time travelling And this time I was not seated properly in the saddle, but sideways and in an unstable fashion For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed and vibrated, quite unheeding how I went, and when I brought myself to look at the dials again I was amazed to find where I had arrived One dial records days, another thousands of days, another millions of days, and another thousands of millions Now, instead of reversing the levers, I had pulled them over so as to go forward with them and when I came to look at these indicators I found that the thousands hand was sweeping round as fast as the seconds hand of a watch—into futurity

"As I drove on, a peculiar change crept over the appearance of things The palpitating greyness grew darker, then—though I was still travelling with prodigious velocity—the blinking succession of day and night, which was usually indicative of a slower pace, returned, and grew more and more marked This puzzled me very much at first The alternations of night and day grew slower and slower, and so did the passage of the sun across the sky, until they seemed to stretch through centuries At last a steady twilight brooded over the earth, a twilight only broken now and then when a comet glared across the darkling sky The band of light that had indicated the sun had long since disappeared, for the sun had ceased to set—it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red All trace of the moon had vanished The circling of the stars, growing slower and slower, had given place to creeping points of light At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat, and now and then

suffering a momentary extinction. At one time it had for a little while glowed more brilliantly again, but it speedily reverted to its sullen red heat. I perceived by this slowing down of its rising and setting that the work of the tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face to the sun, even as in our own time the moon faces the earth. Very cautiously, for I remembered my former headlong fall, I began to reverse my motion. Slower and slower went the circling hands until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one was no longer a mere mist upon its scale. Still slower, until the dim outlines of a desolate beach grew visible.

"I stopped very gently and sat upon the Time Machine, looking round. The sky was no longer blue. North-eastward it was inky black, and out of the blackness shone brightly and steadily the pale white stars. Overhead it was a deep Indian red and starless, and south-eastward it grew brighter to a glowing scarlet where, cut by the horizon, lay the huge hull of the sun, red and motionless. The rocks about me were of a harsh reddish colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first was the intensely green vegetation that covered every projecting point on their south-eastern face. It was the same rich green that one sees on forest moss or on the lichen in caves: plants which like these grow in a perpetual twilight.

"The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The sensation reminded me

of my only experience of mountaineering, and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is now

"Far away up the desolate slope I heard a harsh scream and saw a thing like a huge white butterfly go slanting and fluttering up into the sky and, circling disappear over some low hillocks beyond The sound of its voice was so dismal that I shivered and seated myself more firmly upon the machine Looking round me again I saw that quite near, what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me Then I saw the thing was really a monstrous crab like creature Can you imagine a crab as large as yonder table with its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly its big claws swaying its long antennæ like carters whips waving and feeling and its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front? Its back was corrugated and ornamented with ungainly bosses and a greenish incrustation blotched it here and there I could see the many palps of its complicated mouth flickering and feeling as it moved.

"As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there I tried to brush it away with my hand but in a moment it returned and almost immediately came another by my ear I struck at this and caught something threadlike It was drawn swiftly out of my hand With a frightful qualm I turned and saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me Its evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks its mouth was all alive with appetite and its vast ungainly claws smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon me In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters But I was still on the same beach and I saw them distinctly now as soon as I stopped Dozens of them seemed to be crawling here and there in the sombre light, among the foliated sheets of intense green

"I cannot convey the sense of abominable desolation that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the northward blackness, the salt Dead Sea, the stony beach crawling with these foul, slow-stirring monsters, the uniform poisonous-looking green of the lichenous plants, the thin air that hurts one's lungs, all contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years, and there was the same red sun—a little larger, a little duller—the same dying sea, the same chill air, and the same crowd of earthy crustacea creeping in and out among the green weed and the red rocks. And in the westward sky I saw a curved pale line like a vast new moon.

"So I travelled, stopping ever and again, in great strides of a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away. At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens. Then I stopped once more, for the crawling multitude of crabs had disappeared, and the red beach, save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless. And now it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me. Rare white flakes ever and again came eddying down. To the north-eastward, the glare of snow lay under the starlight of the sable sky, and I could see an undulating crest of hillocks pinkish white. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, with drifting masses further out, but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

"I looked about me to see if any traces of animal life remained. A certain indefinable apprehension still kept me in the saddle of the machine. But I saw nothing moving, in earth or sky or sea. The green slime on the rocks alone testified that life was not

4

rocket As I returned I passed again across that minute when she traversed the laboratory But now her every motion appeared to be the exact inversion of her previous ones The door at the lower end opened, and she glided quietly up the laboratory, back fore most, and disappeared behind the door by which she had previously entered Just before that I seemed to see Hillyer for a moment, but he passed like a flash

"Then I stopped the machine and saw about me again the old familiar laboratory, my tools, my appliances just as I had left them I got off the thing very shakily, and sat down upon my bench For several minutes I trembled violently Then I became calmer Around me was my old workshop again, exactly as it had been I might have slept there, and the whole thing have been a dream

"And yet not exactly! The thing had started from the south east corner of the laboratory It had come to rest again in the north west against the wall where you saw it That gives you the exact distance from my little lawn to the pedestal of the White Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine

"For a time my brain went stagnant Presently I got up and came through the passage here limping, because my heel was still painful, and feeling sorely begrimed I saw the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the table by the door I found the date was indeed to day and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour was almost eight o'clock I heard your voices and the clatter of plates I hesitated—I felt so sick and weak Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, and opened the door on you You know the rest I washed and dined, and now I am telling you the story"

"I know," he said after a pause, "that all this will be absolutely incredible to you To me the one incredible thing is that I am here to night in this old familiar room looking into your friendly faces and telling you these strange adventures"

He looked at the Medical Man "No I cannot expect you to believe it Take it as a lie—or a prophecy Say I dreamed it in the workshop Consider I have been speculating upon the destinies of our race until I have hatched this fiction Treat my assertion of its truth as a mere stroke of art to enhance its interest And taking it as a story, what do you think of it?"

He took up his pipe and began in his old accustomed manner, to tap with it nervously upon the bars of the grate There was a momentary stillness Then chairs began to creak and shoes to scrape upon the carpet I took my eyes off the Time Traveller's face, and looked round at his audience They were in the dark, and little spots of colour swam before them The Medical Man seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host The Editor was looking hard at the end of his cigar—the sixth The Journalist fumbled for his watch The others, as far as I remember, were motionless

The Editor stood up with a sigh "What a pity it is you're not a writer of stories!" he said, putting his hand on the Time Traveller's shoulder

"You don't believe it?"

"Well——"

"I thought not"

The Time Traveller turned to us "Where are the matches?" he said He lit one and spoke over his pipe, puffing "To tell you the truth I hardly believe it myself And yet"

His eye fell with a mute inquiry upon the withered white flowers upon the little table Then he turned over the hand holding his pipe and I saw he was looking at some half healed scars on his knuckles

The Medical Man rose came to the lamp and examined the flowers "The gynæceum's odd" he said The Psychologist leant forward to see, holding out his hand for a specimen

"I'm hanged if it isn't a quarter to one," said the Journalist "How shall we get home?"

"Plenty of cabs at the station," said the Psychologist

"It's a curious thing," said the Medical Man "but I certainly don't know the natural order of these flowers May I have them?"

The Time Traveller hesitated Then suddenly "Certainly not"

"Where did you really get them?" said the Medical Man

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head He spoke like one who was trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him "They were put into my pocket by Weena, when I travelled into Time' He stared round the room "I m damned if it isn't all going This room and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it all only a dream? They say life is a dream, a precious poor dream at times—but I can't stand another that won't fit It's madness And where did the dream come from? I must look at that machine If there *is* one!"

He caught up the lamp swiftly and carried it flaring red, through the door into the corridor We followed him There in the flickering light of the lamp was the machine sure enough, squat ugly, and askew, a thing of brass ebony ivory, and translucent glimmering quartz Solid to the touch—for I put out my hand and felt the rail of it—and with brown spots and smears upon the ivory, and bits of grass and moss upon the lower parts, and one rail bent awry

The Time Traveller put the lamp down on the bench, and ran his hand along the damaged rail "It's all right now," he said "The story I told you was true I'm sorry to have brought you out here

I consented, hardly comprehending then the full import of his words, and he nodded and went on down the corridor. I heard the door of the laboratory slam, seated myself in a chair, and took up a daily paper. What was he going to do before lunch time? Then suddenly I was reminded by an advertisement that I had promised to meet Richardson, the publisher, at two. I looked at my watch, and saw that I could barely save that engagement. I got up and went down the passage to tell the Time Traveller.

As I took hold of the handle of the door I heard an exclamation, oddly truncated at the end, and a click and a thud. A gust of air whirled round me as I opened the door, and from within came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The Time Traveller was not there. I seemed to see a ghostly, indistinct figure sitting in a whirling mass of black and brass for a moment—a figure so transparent that the bench behind with its sheets of drawings was absolutely distinct, but this phantasm vanished as I rubbed my eyes. The Time Machine had gone. Save for a subsiding stir of dust, the further end of the laboratory was empty. A pane of the skylight had, apparently, just been blown in.

I felt an unreasonable amazement. I knew that something strange had happened, and for the moment could not distinguish what the strange thing might be. As I stood staring, the door into the garden opened, and the man servant appeared.

We looked at each other. Then ideas began to come. "Has Mr —— gone out that way?" said I.

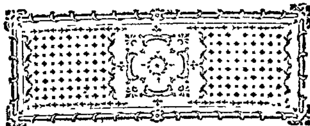
"No, sir. No one has come out this way. I was expecting to find him here."

At that I understood. At the risk of disappointing Richardson I stayed on, waiting for the Time Traveller; waiting for the second, perhaps still stranger story, and the specimens and photographs he would

bring with him But I am beginning now to fear that I must wait a lifetime The Time Traveller vanished three years ago And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned

EPILOGUE

One cannot choose but wonder Will he ever return? *It may be that he swept back into the past* and fell among the blood drinking hairy savages of the Age of Unpolished Stone into the abysses of the Cretaceous Sea, or among the grotesque saurians, the huge reptilian brutes of the Jurassic times He may even now—if I may use the phrase—be wandering on some plesiosaurus haunted Oolitic coral reef or beside the lonely saline lakes of the Triassic Age Or did he go forward, into one of the nearer ages, in which men are still men but with the riddles of our own time answered and its wearisome problems solved? Into the manhood of the race for I for my own part, cannot think that these latter days of weak experiment, fragmentary theory, and mutual discord are indeed man's culminating time! I say for my own part. He, I know—for the question had been discussed among us long before the Time Machine was made—thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilisation only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end If that is so it remains for us to live as though it were not so But to me the future is still black and blank —is a vast ignorance, lit at a few casual places by the *memory of his story And I have by me for my* comfort, two strange white flowers—shrivelled now, and brown and flat and brittle—to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man



STORY THE SECOND

The Empire of the Ants

§ 1

WHEN Captain Gerilleau received instructions to take his new gunboat, the *Benjamin Constant* to Badama on the Batemo arm of the Guaramadema and there assist the inhabitants against a plague of ants, he suspected the authorities of mockery His promotion had been romantic and irregular, the affections of a prominent Brazilian lady and the captain's liquid eyes had played a part in the process, and the *Diario* and *O Futuro* had been lamentably disrespectful in their comments He felt he was to give further occasion for disrespect

He was a Creole, his conceptions of etiquette and discipline were pure blooded Portuguese, and it was only to Holroyd, the Lancashire engineer who had come over with the boat, and as an exercise in the

use of English—his "th" sounds were very uncertain—that he opened his heart

"It is in effect," he said 'to make me absurd! What can a man do against ants? Dey come, dey go"

"They say," said Holroyd "that these don't go That chap you said was a Sambo——"

"Zambo—it is a sort of mixture of blood"

"Sambo He said the people are going!"

The captain smoked fretfully for a time "Dese tings 'ave to happen," he said at last "What is it? Plagues of ants and suchlike as God wills Dere was a plague in Trinidad—the little ants that carry leaves Orl der orange trees, all der mangoes! What does it matter? Sometimes ant armies come into your houses—fighting ants a different sort You go and they clean the house Then you come back again—the house is clean like new! No cockroaches, no fleas, no jiggers in the floor"

"That Sambo chap" said Holroyd, "says these are a different sort of ant"

The captain shrugged his shoulders fumed, and gave his attention to a cigarette

Afterwards he reopened the subject 'My dear 'Olroyd, what am I to do about dese infernal ants?"

The captain reflected "It is ridiculous" he said But in the afternoon he put on his full uniform and went ashore, and jars and boxes came back to the ship and subsequently he did And Holroyd sat on deck in the evening coolness and smoked profoundly and marvelled at Brazil They were six days up the Amazon, some hundreds of miles from the ocean, and east and west of him there was a horizon like the sea, and to the south nothing but a sand bank island with some tufts of scrub The water was always running like a sluice thick with dirt, animated with crocodiles and hovering birds, and fed by some inexhaustible source of tree trunks and the waste of it, the head

long waste of it, filled his soul The town of Alemquer, with its meagre church, its thatched sheds for houses, its discoloured ruins of ampler days, seemed a little thing lost in this wilderness of Nature a six pence dropped on Sahara He was a young man, this was his first sight of the tropics, he came straight from England, where Nature is hedged, ditched, and drained into the perfection of submission and he had suddenly discovered the insignificance of man For six days they had been steaming up from the sea by unfrequented channels and man had been as rare as a rare butterfly One saw one day a canoe, another day a distant station, the next no men at all He began to perceive that man is indeed a rare animal, having but a precarious hold upon this land

He perceived it more clearly as the days passed, and he made his devious way to the Batemo, in the company of this remarkable commander, who ruled over one big gun and was forbidden to waste his ammunition Holroyd was learning Spanish indus triously, but he was still in the present tense and sub stantive stage of speech and the only other person who had any words of English was a negro stoker, who had them all wrong The second in command was a Portuguese, da Cunha, who spoke French, but it was a different sort of French from the French Holroyd had learned in Southport, and their intercourse was confined to politenesses and simple propositions about the weather And the weather, like everything else in this amazing new world the weather had no human aspect, and was hot by night and hot by day, and the air steam, even the wind was hot steam smelling of vegetation in decay and the alligators and the strange birds, the flies of many sorts and sizes the beetles, the ants, the snakes and monkeys seemed to wonder what man was doing in an atmosphere that had no gladness in its sunshine and no coolness in its night To wear clothing was intolerable, but to cast it aside was to

scorch by day, and expose an ampler area to the mosquitoes by night, to go on deck by day was to be blinded by glare and to stay below was to suffocate. And in the daytime came certain flies extremely clever and noxious about one's wrist and ankle. Captain Gerilleau, who was Holroyd's sole distraction from these physical distresses, developed into a formidable bore, telling the simple story of his heart's affections day by day, a string of anonymous women, as if he was telling beads. Sometimes he suggested sport, and they shot at alligators, and at rare intervals they came to human aggregations in the waste of trees and stayed for a day or so and drank and sat about, and, one night, danced with Creole girls, who found Holroyd's poor elements of Spanish, without either past tense or future, amply sufficient for their purposes. But these were mere luminous chinks in the long grey passage of the streaming river up which the throbbing engines beat. A certain liberal heathen deity, in the shape of a demi-john, held seductive court aft, and, it is probable, forward.

But Gerilleau learned things about the ants, more things and more, at this stopping place and that, and became interested in his mission.

"Dey are a new sort of ant," he said. "We have got to be—what do you call it?—entomologie? Big. Five centimetres! Some bigger! It is ridiculous. We are like the monkeys—sent to pick insects. But dey are eating up the country."

He burst out indignantly. "Suppose—suddenly, there are complications with Europe. Here am I—soon we shall be above the Rio Negro—and my gun useless!"

He nursed his knee and mused.

"Dose people who were dere at de dancing place, dey 'ave come down. Dey 'ave lost all they got. De ants come to deir house one afternoon. Everyone run out. You know when de ants come one must—

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three men spent disputing whether ants have eyes. The discussion grew dangerously heated on the second afternoon, and Holroyd saved the situation by going ashore in a boat to catch ants and see. He captured various specimens and returned, and some had eyes and some hadn't. Also, they argued, do ants bite or sting?

"Dese ants," said Gerilleau, after collecting information at a rancho, "have big eyes. They don't run about blind—not as most ants do. No! Dey get in corners and watch what you do."

"And they sting?" asked Holroyd.

"Yes. Dey sting. Dere is poison in the sting." He meditated. "I do not see what men can do against ants. Dey come and go."

"But these don't go."

"They will," said Gerilleau.

Past Tamandu there is a long low coast of eighty miles without any population, and then one comes to the confluence of the main river and the Batemo arm like a great lake, and then the forest came nearer, came at last intimately near. The character of the channel changes, snags abound, and the *Benjamin Constant* moored by a cable that night under the very shadow of dark trees. For the first time for many days came a spell of coolness, and Holroyd and Gerilleau sat late, smoking cigars and enjoying this delicious sensation. Gerilleau's mind was full of ants and what they could do. He decided to sleep at last, and lay down on a mattress on deck, a man hopelessly perplexed, his last words, when he already seemed asleep, were to ask, with a flourish of despair, "What can one do with ants? . . . De whole thing is absurd."

Holroyd was left to scratch his bitten wrists, and meditate alone.

He sat on the bulwark and listened to the changes in Gerilleau's breathing until he was fast asleep, and then the ripple and lap of the stream took his mind,

and brought back that sense of immensity that had been [illegible] left Para and come [illegible] ut one small light, [illegible] forward and then [illegible] dim black outlines of the middle works of the gunboat towards the bank, to the black overwhelming mysteries of forest, lit now and then by a fire fly, and never still from the murmur of alien and mysterious activities

It was the inhuman immensity of this land that astonished and oppressed him He knew the skies were empty of men, the stars were specks in an incredible vastness of space, he knew the ocean was enormous and untamable, but in England he had come to think of the land as man's In England it is indeed man's, the wild things live by sufferance, grow on lease, every where the roads, the fences, and absolute security runs In an atlas, too, the land is man's, and all coloured to show his claim to it—in vivid contrast to the universal independent blueness of the sea He had taken it for granted that a day would come when everywhere about the earth, plough and culture, light tramways and good roads an ordered security, would prevail But now, he doubted

This forest was interminable, it had an air of being invincible, and Man seemed at best an infrequent precarious intruder One travelled for miles amidst the still, silent struggle of giant trees, of strangulating creepers, of assertive flowers everywhere the alligator, the turtle, and endless varieties of birds and insects seemed at home, dwelt irreplaceably—but man, man at most held a footing upon resentful clearings, fought weeds, fought beasts and insects for the barest foothold fell a prey to snake and beast, insect and fever, and was presently carried away In many places down the river he had been manifestly driven back, this deserted creek or that preserved the name of a *casa* and here and there ruinous white walls and a shattered tower enforced

the lesson The puma, the jaguar, were more the masters here

Who were the real masters?

In a few miles of this forest there must be more ants than there are men in the whole *world*! This seemed to Holroyd a perfectly new idea In a few thousand years men had emerged from barbarism to a stage of civilisation that made them feel lords of the future and masters of the earth! But what was to prevent the ants evolving also? Such ants as one knew lived in little communities of a few thousand individuals made no concerted efforts against the greater world! But they had a language, they had an intelligence! Why should things stop at that any more than men had stopped at the barbaric stage? Suppose presently the ants began to store knowledge, just as men had done by means of books and records, use weapons, form great empires, sustain a planned and organised war?

Things came back to him that Gerilleau had gathered about these ants they were approaching They used a poison like the poison of snakes They obeyed greater leaders even as the leaf cutting ants do They were carnivorous, and where they came they stayed

The forest was very still The water lapped incessantly against the side About the lantern overhead there eddied a noiseless whirl of phantom moths

Gerilleau stirred in the darkness and sighed "What can one *do*!" he murmured, and turned over and was still again

Holroyd was roused from meditations that were becoming sinister by the hum of a mosquito

§ 2

The next morning Holroyd learned they were within forty kilometres of Badama, and his interest in the banks intensified He came up whenever an oppor

tunity offered to examine his surroundings He could see no signs of human occupation whatever, save for a weedy ruin of a house and the green stained façade of the long deserted monastery at Mojû, with a forest tree growing out of a vacant window space, and great creepers netted across its vacant portals Several flights of strange yellow butterflies with semi transparent wings crossed the river that morning, and many alighted on the monitor and were killed by the men It was towards afternoon that they came upon the derelict cuberta

She did not at first appear to be derelict, both her sails were set and hanging slack in the afternoon calm, and there was the figure of a man sitting on the fore planking beside the shipped sweeps Another man appeared to be sleeping face downwards on the sort of longitudinal bridge these big canoes have in the waist But it was presently apparent, from the sway of her rudder and the way she drifted into the course of the gunboat, that something was out of order with her Gerilleau surveyed her through a field glass, and became interested in the queer darkness of the face of the sitting man, a red faced man he seemed, without a nose—crouching he was rather than sitting, and the longer the captain looked the less he liked to look at him, and the less able he was to take his glasses away

But he did so at last, and went a little way to call up Holroyd Then he went back to hail the cuberta He hailed her again and so she drove past him *Santa Rosa* stood out clearly as her name

As she came by and into the wake of the monitor, she pitched a little, and suddenly the figure of the crouching man collapsed as though all its joints had given way His hat fell off, his head was not nice to look at, and his body flopped lax and rolled out of sight behind the bulwarks

"Caramba!" cried Gerilleau, and resorted to Holroyd forthwith

Holroyd was half way up the companion "Did you see dat?" said the captain

"Dead!" said Holroyd "Yes You'd better send a boat aboard There's something wrong"

"Did you—by any chance—see his face?"

"What was it like?"

"It was—ugh!—I have no words" And the captain suddenly turned his back on Holroyd and became an active and strident commander

The gunboat came about steamed parallel to the erratic course of the canoe and dropped the boat with Lieutenant da Cunha and three sailors to board her Then the curiosity of the captain made him draw up almost alongside as the lieutenant got aboard so that the whole of the *Santa Rosa* deck and hold, was visible to Holroyd

He saw now clearly that the sole crew of the vessel was these two dead men, and though he could not see their faces he saw by their outstretched hands, which were all of ragged flesh that they had been subjected to some strange exceptional process of decay *For a moment his attention concentrated on those* two enigmatical bundles of dirty clothes and laxly flung limbs, and then his eyes went forward to discover the open hold piled high with trunks and cases, and aft, to where the little cabin gaped inexplicably empty Then he became aware that the planks of the middle decking were dotted with moving black specks

His attention was riveted by these specks They were all walking in directions radiating from the fallen man in a manner—the image came unsought to his mind—like the crowd dispersing from a bull fight

He became aware of Gerilleau beside him "Capo" he said, "have you your glasses? Can you focus as closely as those planks there?"

Gerilleau made an effort, grunted, and handed him the glasses

There followed a moment of scrutiny "It's ants"

said the Englishman, and handed the focused field glasses back to Gerilleau

His impression of them was of a crowd of large black ants, very like ordinary ants except for their size, and for the fact that some of the larger of them bore a sort of clothing of grey But at the time his inspection was too brief for particulars The head of Lieutenant da Cunha appeared over the side of the cuberta, and a brief colloquy ensued

"You must go aboard ' said Gerilleau

The lieutenant objected that the boat was full of ants

"You have your boots," said Gerilleau

The lieutenant changed the subject "How did these men die?" he asked

Captain Gerilleau embarked upon speculations that Holroyd could not follow, and the two men disputed with a certain increasing vehemence Holroyd took up the field glass and resumed his scrutiny, first of the ants and then of the dead man amidsh ps

He has described these ants to me very particularly

He says they were as large as any ants he has ever seen, black and moving with a steady deliberation very different from the mechanical fussiness of the common ant About one in twenty was much larger than its fellows and with an exceptionally large head These reminded him at once of the master workers who are said to rule over the leaf cutter ants, like them they seemed to be directing and co ordinating the general movements They tilted their bodies back in a manner altogether singular as if they made some use of the fore feet And he had a curious fancy that he was too far off to verify, that most of these ants of both kinds were wearing accoutrements, had things strapped about their bodies by bright white bands like white metal threads

He put down the glasses abruptly realising that the question of discipline between the captain and his subordinate had become acute

"It is your duty," said the captain, "to go aboard It is my instructions"

The lieutenant seemed on the verge of refusing The head of one of the mulatto sailors appeared beside him

"I believe these men were killed by the ants,' said Holroyd abruptly in English

The captain burst into a rage He made no answer to Holroyd "I have commanded you to go aboard," he screamed to his subordinate in Portuguese "If *you do not go aboard forthwith it is mutiny—rank* mutiny Mutiny and cowardice! Where is the courage that should animate us? I will have you in irons, I will have you shot like a dog" He began a torrent of abuse and curses, he danced to and fro He shook his fists, he behaved as if beside himself with rage, and the lieutenant, white and still, stood looking at him The crew appeared forward, with amazed faces

Suddenly, in a pause of this outbreak the lieutenant came to some heroic decision, saluted, drew himself together and clambered upon the deck of the cuberta

"Ah!" said Gerilleau, and his mouth shut like a trap Holroyd saw the ants retreating before da Cunha's boots The Portuguese walked slowly to the fallen man, stooped down, hesitated, clutched his coat and turned him over A black swarm of ants rushed out of the clothes, and da Cunha stepped back very quickly and trod two or three times on the deck

Holroyd put up the glasses He saw the scattered ants about the invader's feet, and doing what he had never seen ants doing before They had nothing of the blind movements of the common ant, they were looking at him—as a rallying crowd of men might look at some gigantic monster that had dispersed it

"How did he die?" the captain shouted

Holroyd understood the Portuguese to say the body was too much eaten to tell

"What is there forward?" asked Gerilleau

The lieutenant walked a few paces and began his answer in Portuguese He stopped abr iptly and beat off something from his leg He made some peculiar steps as if he was trying to stamp on something invisible and went quickly towards the side Then he controlled himself, turned about, walked deliberately forward to the hold, clambered up to the fore deck ing, from which the sweeps are worked stooped for a time over the second man, groaned audibly and made his way back and aft to the cabin moving very rigidly He turned and began a conversation with his cap tain, cold and respectful in tone on either side con trasting vividly with the wrath and insult of a few moments before Holroyd gathered only fragments of its purport

He reverted to the field glass and was surprised to find the ants had vanished from all the exposed sur faces of the deck He turned to vards the shadows beneath the decking and it seemed to him they were full of watching eyes

The cuberta, it was agreed was derelict, but too full of ants to put men aboar l to sit and sleep it must be towed The lieutenant went forward to take in and adjust the cable, and the men in the boat stood up to be ready to help h m Holroyd s glasses searched the canoe

He became more and more impressed by the fact that a great if minute and furtive activity was going on He perceived that a number of gigantic ants—they seemed nearly a couple of inches in length—carrying oddly shaped burthens for which he could imagine no use—were moving in ri shes from one point of obscurity to another They did not move in columns across the exposed places but in open, spaced out lines, oddly suggestive of the rushes of modern infantry advancing under fire A number were taking cover under the dead man's clothes, and a perfect

swarm was gathering along the side over which da Cunha must presently go.

He did not see them actually rush for the lieutenant as he returned, but he has no doubt they did make a concerted rush. Suddenly the lieutenant was shouting and cursing and beating at his legs. "I'm stung!" he shouted, with a face of hate and accusation towards Gerilleau.

Then he vanished over the side, dropped into his boat, and plunged at once into the water. Holroyd heard the splash.

The three men in the boat pulled him out and brought him aboard, and that night he died.

§ 3

Holroyd and the captain came out of the cabin in which the swollen and contorted body of the lieutenant lay and stood together at the stern of the monitor, staring at the sinister vessel they trailed behind them. It was a close, dark night that had only phantom flickerings of sheet lightning to illuminate it. The cuberta, a vague black triangle, rocked about in the steamer's wake, her sails bobbing and flapping, and the black smoke from the funnel's spark lit ever and again, streamed over her swaying masts.

Gerilleau's mind was inclined to run on the unkind things the lieutenant had said in the heat of his last fever.

"He says I murdered 'im," he protested. "It is simply absurd. Someone *'ad* to go aboard. Are we to run away from these confounded ants whenever they show up?"

Holroyd said nothing. He was thinking of a disciplined rush of little black shapes across bare sunlit planking.

"It was his place to go," harped Gerilleau. "He

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came back enormously reinforced on the morrow, when at last the gunboat reached Badama

This place, with its leaf thatched houses and sheds, its creeper invaded sugar mill its little jetty of timber and canes, was very still in the morning heat, and showed never a sign of living men Whatever ants there were at that distance were too small to see

"All the people have gone," said Gerilleau "but we will do one thing anyhow We will 'oot and vissel"

So Holroyd hooted and whistled

Then the captain fell into a doubting fit of the worst kind "Dere is one thing we can do," he said presently

"What's that?" said Holroyd

"'Oot and vissel again"

So they did

The captain walked his deck and gesticulated to himself He seemed to have many things on his mind Fragments of speeches came from his lips He appeared to be addressing some imaginary public tribunal either in Spanish or Portuguese Holroyd's improving ear detected something about ammunition He came out of these preoccupations suddenly into English "My dear 'Olroyd!" he cried, and broke off with "But what *can* one do?"

They took the boat and the field glasses, and went close in to examine the place They made out a number of big ants, whose still postures had a certain effect of watching them, dotted about the edge of the rude embarkation jetty Gerilleau tried ineffectual pistol shots at these Holroyd thinks he distinguished curious earthworks running between the nearer houses, that may have been the work of the insect conquerors of those human habitations The explorers pulled past the jetty, and became aware of a human skeleton wearing a loin cloth, and very bright and clean and shining, lying beyond They came to a pause regarding this . . .

for nearly sixty miles, they have in their effectual occupation they have driven men out completely, occupied plantations and settlements and boarded and captured at least one ship It is even said they have in some inexplicable way bridged the very considerable Capuarana arm and pushed many miles towards the Amazon itself There can be little doubt that they are far more reasonable and with a far better social organisation than any previously known ant species instead of being in dispersed societies they are organised into what is in effect a single nation, but their peculiar and immediate formidableness lies not so much in this as in the intelligent use they make of poison against their larger enemies It would seem this poison of theirs is closely akin to snake poison, and it is highly probable they actually manufacture it, and that the larger individuals among them carry the needle like crystals of it in their attacks upon men

Of course it is extremely difficult to get any detailed information about these new competitors for the sovereignty of the globe No eye witnesses of their activity, except for such glimpses as Holroyd s, have survived the encounter The most extraordinary legends of their prowess and capacity are in circulation in the region of the Upper Amazon, and grow daily as the steady advance of the invader stimulates men s imaginations through their fears These strange little creatures are credited not only with the use of implements and a knowledge of fire and metals and with organised feats of engineering that stagger our Northern minds—unused as we are to such feats as that of the Saübas of Rio de Janeiro who in 1841 drove a tunnel under Parahyba where it is as wide as the Thames at London Bridge—but with an organised and detailed method of record and communication analogous to our books So far their action has been a steady progressive settlement, involving the flight or slaughter of every human being in the new areas they invade They are increasing

rapidly in numbers, and Holroyd at least is firmly convinced that they will finally dispossess man over the whole of tropical South America.

And why should they stop at tropical South America? Well, there they are, anyhow. By 1911 or thereabouts, if they go on as they are going, they ought to strike the Capuarana Extension Railway, and force themselves upon the attention of the European capitalist.

By 1920 they will be half way down the Amazon. I fix 1950 or '60 at the latest for the discovery of Europe.



STORY THE THIRD

A Vision of Judgment

§ 1

BRU A A A

I listened, not understanding

Wa ra ra ra

"Good Lord!" said I, still only half awake "What an infernal shindy!"

Ra ra ra ra ra ra ra ra ra Ta ra rra ra

"It's enough," said I, "to wake——" and stopped short Where was I?

Ta rra rara—louder and louder

"It's either some new invention——"

Toora toora toora! Deafening!

"No," said I, speaking loud in order to hear myself "That's the Last Trump"

Tooo-rraa!

§ 2

The last note jerked me out of my grave like a hooked minnow

I saw my monument (rather a mean little affair, and I wished I knew who'd done it), and the old elm tree

and the sea view vanished like a puff of steam, and then all about me—a multitude no man could number, nations, tongues, kingdoms, peoples—children of all the ages, in an amphitheatral space as vast as the sky And over against us, seated on a throne of dazzling white cloud, the Lord God and all the host of His angels I recognised Azreal by his darkness and Michael by his sword, and the great angel who had blown the trumpet stood with the trumpet still half raised

§ 3

"Prompt," said the little man beside me "Very prompt Do you see the angel with the book?

He was ducking and craning his head about to see over and under and between the souls that crowded round us "Everybody's here," he said "Everybody And now we shall know——

"There's Darwin," he said, going off at a tangent "*He'll* catch it! And there—you see?—that tall, important looking man trying to catch the eye of the Lord God, that's the Duke But there's a lot of people one doesn't know

"Oh! there's Priggles, the publisher I have always wondered about printers overs Priggles was a clever man . . But we shall know now—even about him

"I shall hear all that I shall get most of the fun before . *My* letter's S"

He drew the air in between his teeth

"Historical characters, too See? That's Henry the Eighth There'll be a good bit of evidence Oh, damn! He's Tudor"

He lowered his voice "*Notice this chap just in* front of us, all covered with hair Paleolithic, you know And there again——"

But I did not heed him because I was looking at the Lord God

§ 4

"Is this *all?*' asked the Lord God

The angel at the book—it was one of countless volumes like the British Museum Reading room Catalogue, glanced at us and seemed to count us in the instant

"That's all," he said, and added "It was, O God, a very little planet"

The eyes of God surveyed us

"Let us begin," said the Lord God

§ 5

The angel opened the book and read a name It was a name full of A's, and the echoes of it came back out of the uttermost parts of space I did not catch it clearly, because the little man beside me said in a sharp jerk, "*What's* that?" It sounded like 'Ahab" to me, but it could not have been the Ahab of Scripture

Instantly a small black figure was lifted up to a puffy cloud at the very feet of God It was a stiff little figure, dressed in rich outlandish robes and crowned, and it folded its arms and scowled

"Well?" said God, looking down at him

We were privileged to hear the reply, and indeed the acoustic properties of the place were marvellous

"I plead guilty," said the little figure

"Tell them what you have done,' said the Lord God

'I was a king" said the little figure, "a great king and I was lustful and proud and cruel I made wars I devastated countries, I built palaces and the mortar was the blood of men Hear, O God, the witnesses against me, calling to you for vengeance Hundreds and thousands of witnesses" He waved his hands

towards us "And worse! I took a prophet—one of your prophets——"

"One of my prophets," said the Lord God

"And because he would not bow to me, I tortured him for four days and nights and in the end he died I did more, O God, I blasphemed I robbed you of your honours——"

"Robbed me of my honours," said the Lord God

"I caused myself to be worshipped in your stead No evil was there but I practised it no cruelty where with I did not stain my soul And at last you smote me, O God!"

God raised his eyebrows slightly

"And I was slain in battle And so I stand before you, meet for your nethermost Hell! Out of your greatness daring no lies daring no pleas but telling the truth of my iniquities before all mankind"

He ceased His face I saw distinctly and it seemed to me white and terrible and proud and strangely noble I thought of Milton's Satan

"Most of that is from the Obelisk," said the Recording Angel, finger on page

"It is," said the Tyrannous Man, with a faint touch of surprise

Then suddenly God bent forward and took this man in his hand, and held him up on his palm as if to see him better He was just a little dark stroke in the middle of God's palm

"*Did* he do all this?" said the Lord God

The Recording Angel flattened his book with his hand

"In a way," said the Recording Angel, carelessly

Now when I looked again at the little man his face had changed in a very curious manner He was looking at the Recording Angel with a strange apprehension in his eyes, and one hand fluttered to his mouth Just the movement of a muscle or so, and all that dignity of defiance was gone

"Read," said the Lord God

And the angel read, explaining very carefully and fully all the wickedness of the Wicked Man It was quite an intellectual treat—A little 'daring" in places, I thought, but of course Heaven has its privileges . . .

§ 6

Everybody was laughing Even the prophet of the Lord whom the Wicked Man had tortured had a smile on his face The Wicked Man was really such a preposterous little fellow

"And then," read the Recording Angel with a smile that set us all agog, "one day, when he was a little irascible from over eating, he——'

"Oh, not *that*," cried the Wicked Man, "nobody knew of *that*

"It didn't happen," screamed the Wicked Man "I was bad—I was really bad Frequently bad, but there was nothing so silly—so absolutely silly——"

The angel went on reading

"O God!" cried the Wicked Man "Don't let them know that! I'll repent! I'll apologise "

The Wicked Man on God's hand began to dance and weep Suddenly shame overcame him He made a wild rush to jump off the ball of God's little finger, but God stopped him by a dexterous turn of the wrist Then he made a rush for the gap between hand and thumb, but the thumb closed And all the while the angel went on reading—reading The Wicked Man rushed to and fro across God's palm, and then suddenly turned about and fled up the sleeve of God

I expected God would turn him out, but the mercy of God is infinite

The Recording Angel paused

"Eh?" said the Recording Angel

"Next," said God, and before the Recording Angel could call upon the name a hairy creature in filthy rags stood upon God's palm

§ 7

"Has God got Hell up his sleeve then?" said the little man beside me

"Is there a Hell?" I asked

"If you notice," he said—he peered between the feet of the great angels—"there's no particular indication of the Celestial City"

"'Ssh!" said a little woman near us, scowling "Hear this blessed Saint!"

§ 8

"He was Lord of the Earth, but I was the prophet of the God of Heaven" cried the Saint, "and all the people marvelled at the sign For I, O God, knew of the glories of thy Paradise No pain, no hardship, gashing with knives, splinters thrust under my nails, strips of flesh flayed off, all for the glory and honour of God"

God smiled

"And at last I went, I in my rags and sores, smelling of my holy discomforts——"

Gabriel laughed abruptly

"And lay outside his gates, as a sign, as a wonder——"

"As a perfect nuisance," said the Recording Angel, and began to read heedless of the fact that the Saint was still speaking of the gloriously unpleasant things he had done that Paradise might be his

And behold, in that book the record of the Saint also was a revelation, a marvel

It seemed not ten seconds before the Saint also was rushing to and fro over the great palm of God Not

ten seconds! And at last he also shrieked beneath that pitiless and cynical exposition and fled also even as the Wicked Man had fled into the shadow of the sleeve And it was permitted us to see into the shadow of the sleeve And the two sat side by side stark of all delusions in the shadow of the robe of God's charity like brothers

And thither also I fled in my turn

§ 9

"And now," said God, as he shook us out of his sleeve upon the planet he had given us to live upon the planet that whirled about green Siri s for a sun "now that you understand me and each other a little better, try again"

Then he and his great angels turned themselves about and suddenly had vanished

The Throne had vanished

All about me was a beautiful land more beautiful than any I had ever seen before—waste, austere and wonderful, and all about me were the enlightened souls of men in new clean bodies . . .

STORY THE FOURTH

*The Land Ironclads**

§ 1

THE young lieutenant lay beside the war correspondent and admired the idyllic calm of the enemy's lines through his field glass

"So far as I can see," he said at last, "one man"

"What's he doing?" asked the war correspondent.

"Field glass at us," said the young lieutenant

"And this is war!"

"No," said the young lieutenant, "it's Bloch"

"The game's a draw"

"No! They've got to win or else they lose A draw's a win for our side"

They had discussed the political situation fifty times or so, and the war correspondent was weary of it He stretched out his limbs "Aaai s'pose it *is*!" he yawned

Flut!

"What was that?"

* First Published in December 1903

"Shot at us"

The war correspondent shifted to a slightly lower position "No one shot at him, he complained

"I wonder if they think we shall get so bored we shall go home?"

The war correspondent made no reply

"There's the harvest, of course

They had been there a month Since the first brisk movements after the declaration of war things had gone slower and slower, until it seemed as though the whole machine of events must have run down To begin with, they had had almost a scampering time, the invader had come across the frontier on the very dawn of the war in half a dozen parallel columns behind a cloud of cyclists and cavalry with a general air of coming straight on the capital, and the defender horsemen had held him up, and peppered him and forced him to open out to outflank and had then bolted to the next position in the most approved style, for a couple of days until in the afternoon bump! they had the invader against their prepared lines of defence He did not suffer so much as had been hoped and expected he was coming on, it seemed with his eyes open, his scouts winded the guns and down he sat at once without the shadow of an attack and began grubbing trenches for himself, as though he meant to sit down there to the very end of time He was slow but much more wary than the world had been led to expect, and he kept convoys ticked in and shielded his slow marching infantry sufficiently well to prevent any heavy adverse scoring

"But he ought to attack," the young lieutenant had insisted

"He'll attack us at dawn, somewhere along the lines You'll get the bayonets coming into the trenches just about when you can see, the war correspondent had held until a week ago

The young lieutenant winked when he said that.

When one early morning the men the defenders sent to lie out five hundred yards before the trenches, with a view to the unexpected emptying of magazines into any night attack, gave way to causeless panic and blazed away at nothing for ten minutes, the war correspondent understood the meaning of these words.

"What would you do if you were the enemy?" said the war correspondent, suddenly.

"If I had men like I've got now?"

"Yes"

"Take those trenches"

"How?"

"Oh—dodges! Crawl out half way at night before moonrise and get into touch with the chaps we send out. Blaze at 'em if they tried to shift, and so bag some of 'em in the daylight. Learn that patch of ground by heart, lie all day in squatty holes, and come on nearer next night. There's a bit over there, lumpy ground, where they could get across to rushing distance—easy. In a night or so. It would be a mere game for our fellows, it's what they're made for. Guns? Shrapnel and stuff wouldn't stop good men who meant business"

"Why don't *they* do that?"

"Their men aren't brutes enough, that's the trouble. They're a crowd of devitalised townsmen, and that's the truth of the matter. They're clerks, they're factory hands, they're students, they're civilised men. They can write, they can talk, they can make and do all sorts of things, but they're poor amateurs at war. They've got no physical staying power, and that's the whole thing. They've never slept in the open one night in their lives, they've never drunk anything but the purest water-company water, they've never gone short of three meals a day since they left their feeding-bottles. Half their cavalry never cocked leg over horse till it enlisted six months ago. They ride their horses as though they were bicycles—you watch 'em! They're

fools at the game, and they know it Our boys of fourteen can give their grown men points Very well——"

The war correspondent mused on his face with his nose between his knuckles

"If a decent civilisation," he said, "cannot produce better men for war than——"

He stopped with belated politeness "I mean——"

"Than our open air life," said the young lieutenant

"Exactly," said the war correspondent "Then civilisation has to stop"

"It looks like it," the young lieutenant admitted

"Civilisation has science, you know," said the war correspondent "It invented and it makes the rifles and guns and things you use"

"Which our nice healthy hunters and stockmen and so on, rowdy dowdy cowpunchers and nigger whackers, can use ten times better than—— *What's that?*'

"What?' said the war correspondent and then seeing his companion busy with his field glass he produced his own "Where?" said the war correspondent, sweeping the enemy's lines

"It's nothing,' said the young lieutenant, still looking

"What's nothing?"

The young lieutenant put down his glass and pointed "I thought I saw something there, behind the stems of those trees Something black What it was I don't know"

The war correspondent tried to get even by intense scrutiny

"It wasn't anything," said the young lieutenant, rolling over to regard the darkling evening sky, and generalised "There never will be anything any more for ever Unless——"

The war correspondent looked inquiry

"They may get their stomachs wrong, or something —living without proper drains"

A sound of bugles came from the tents behind The war correspondent slid backward down the sand and stood up "Boom!" came from somewhere far away to the left "Halloa!" he said hesitated, and crawled back to peer again "Firing at this time is jolly bad manners"

The young lieutenant was uncommunicative for a space

Then he pointed to the distant clump of trees again "*One of our big guns They were firing at that,*" he said

"The thing that wasn't anything?"

"Something over there, anyhow"

Both men were silent, peering through their glasses for a space "Just when it's twilight," the lieutenant complained He stood up

"I might stay here a bit," said the war correspondent

The lieutenant shook his head "There's nothing to see," he apologised, and then went down to where *his little squad of sun brown, loose limbed men had* been yarning in the trench The war correspondent stood up also, glanced for a moment at the businesslike bustle below him, gave perhaps twenty seconds to those enigmatical trees again, then turned his face toward the camp

He found himself wondering whether his editor would consider the story of how somebody thought he saw something black behind a clump of trees and how a gun was fired at this illusion by somebody else, too trivial for public consumption

"It's the only gleam of a shadow of interest," said the war correspondent, "for ten whole days

"No," he said presently, "I'll write that other *article*, '*Is War Played Out?*'"

He surveyed the darkling lines in perspective, the tangle of trenches one behind another, one command ing another, which the defender had made ready The shadows and mists swallowed up their receding con

tours, and here and there a lantern gleamed, and here and there knots of men were busy about small fires "No troops on earth could do it" he said

He was depressed He believed that there were other things in life better worth having than proficiency in war, he believed that in the heart of civilisation, for all its stresses, its crushing concentrations of forces, its injustice and suffering there lay something that might be the hope of the world and the idea that any people by living in the open air hunting perpetually, losing touch with books and art and all the things that intensify life, might hope to resist and break that great development to the end of time, jarred on his civilised soul

Apt to his thought came a file of the defender soldiers and passed him in the gleam of a swinging lamp that marked the way

He glanced at their red lit faces and one shone out for a moment, a common type of face in the defender's ranks ill shaped nose, sensuous lips bright clear eyes full of alert cunning slouch hat cocked on one side and adorned with the peacock s plume of the rustic Don Juan turned soldier a hard brown skin a sinewy frame an open, tireless stride, and a master s grip on the rifle

The war correspondent returned their salutations and went on his way

"Louts" he whispered "Cunning elementary louts And they are going to beat the townsmen at the game of war!"

From the red glow among the nearer tents came first one and then half a dozen hearty voices bawling in a drawling unison the words of a particularly slab and sentimental patriotic song

"Oh, *go* it!" muttered the war correspondent, bitterly.

§ 2

It was opposite the trenches called after Hackbone's Hut that the battle began. There the ground stretched broad and level between the lines, with scarcely shelter for a lizard, and it seemed to the startled, just awakened men who came crowding into the trenches that this was one more proof of that inexperience of the enemy of which they had heard so much. The war correspondent would not believe his ears at first, and swore that he and the war artist, who, still imperfectly roused, was trying to put on his boots by the light of a match held in his hand, were the victims of a common illusion. Then, after putting his head in a bucket of cold water, his intelligence came back as he towelled. He listened. "Golly!" he said, "that's something more than scare firing this time. It's like ten thousand carts on a bridge of tin."

There came a sort of enrichment to that steady uproar. "Machine guns!"

Then, "Guns!"

The artist, with one boot on, thought to look at his watch, and went to it hopping.

"Half an hour from dawn," he said. "You were right about their attacking, after all. . . ."

The war correspondent came out of the tent, verifying the presence of chocolate in his pocket as he did so. He had to halt for a moment or so until his eyes were toned down to the night a little. "Pitch!" he said. He stood for a space to season his eyes before he felt justified in striking out for a black gap among the adjacent tents. The artist coming out behind him fell over a tent rope. It was half past two o'clock in the morning of the darkest night in time, and against a sky of dull black silk the enemy was talking search-lights, a wild jabber of search lights. "He's trying to blind our riflemen," said the war correspondent with

a flash, and waited for the artist and then set off with a sort of discreet haste again "Whoa!" he said, presently "Ditches!"

They stopped

"It's the confounded search lights," said the war correspondent

They saw lanterns going to and fro, near by, and men falling in to march down to the trenches They were for following them, and then the artist began to get his night eyes "If we scramble this," he said, "and it's only a drain, there's a clear run up to the ridge" And that way they took Lights came and went in the tents behind, as the men turned out, and ever and again they came to broken ground and staggered and stumbled But in a little while they drew near the crest Something that sounded like the impact of a tremendous railway accident happened in the air above them and the shrapnel bullets seethed about them like a sudden handful of hail "Right ho!" said the war correspondent, and soon they judged they had come to the crest and stood in the midst of a world of great darkness and frantic glares, whose principal fact was sound

Right and left of them and all about them was the uproar, an army full of magazine fire, at first chaotic and monstrous, and then, eked out by little flashes and gleams and suggestions, taking the beginnings of a shape It looked to the war correspondent as though the enemy must have attacked in line and with his whole force—in which case he was either being or was already annihilated

"Dawn and the dead,' he said, with his instinct for headlines He said this to himself but afterwards by means of shouting he conveyed an idea to the artist "They must have meant it for a surprise," he said

It was remarkable how the firing kept on After a time he began to perceive a sort of rhythm in this inferno of noise It would decline—decline per

ceptible, droop towards something that was comparatively a pause—a pause of inquiry "Aren't you all dead yet?" this pause seemed to say The flickering *fringe of rifle flashes would become attenuated* and broken, and the whack-bang of the enemy's big guns two miles away there would come up out of the deeps Then suddenly, east or west of them, something would startle the rifles to a frantic outbreak again

The war correspondent taxed his brain for some theory of conflict that would account for this and was suddenly aware that the artist and he were vividly illuminated He could see the ridge on which they stood, and before them in black outline a file of rifle men hurrying down towards the nearer trenches It became visible that a light rain was falling, and farther away towards the enemy was a clear space with men—"our men?"—running across it in disorder He saw one of those men throw up his hands and drop And something else black and shining loomed up on the edge of the beam-coruscating flashes, and behind it and far away a calm, white eye regarded the world "Whit, whit, whit," sang something in the air, and then the artist was running for cover, with the war correspondent behind him Bang came shrapnel bursting close at hand as it seemed, and our two men were lying flat in a dip in the ground, and the light and everything had gone again, leaving a vast note of interrogation upon the light

The war correspondent came within bawling range "What the deuce was it? Shooting our men down!"

"Black," said the artist, "and like a fort Not two hundred yards from the first trench"

He sought for comparisons in his mind "Something between a big blockhouse and a giant's dish-cover," he said

"And they were running!" said the war correspondent

"*You'd* run if a thing like that, with a search light

to help it, turned up like a prowling nightmare in the middle of the night.

They crawled to what they judged the edge of the dip, and lay regarding the unfathomable dark. For a space they could distinguish nothing, and then a sudden convergence of the search-lights of both sides brought the strange thing out again.

In that flickering pallor it had the effect of a large and clumsy black insect, an insect the size of an iron-clad cruiser, crawling obliquely to the first line of trenches and firing shots out of port-holes in its side. And on its carcass the bullets must have been battering with more than the passionate violence of hail on a roof of tin.

Then in the twinkling of an eye the curtain of the dark had fallen again and the monster had vanished, but the crescendo of musketry marked its approach to the trenches.

They were beginning to talk about the thing to each other, when a flying bullet kicked dirt into the artist's face, and they decided abruptly to crawl down into the cover of the trenches. They had got down with an unobtrusive persistence into the second line, before the dawn had grown clear enough for anything to be seen. They found themselves in a crowd of expectant riflemen, all noisily arguing about what would happen next. The enemy's contrivance had done execution upon the outlying men, it seemed, but they did not believe it would do any more. "Come the day and we'll capture the lot of them," said a burly soldier.

"Them?" said the war correspondent.

"They say there's a regular string of 'em, crawling along the front of our lines.... Who cares?"

The darkness filtered away so imperceptibly that at no moment could one declare decisively that one could see. The search-lights ceased to sweep hither and thither. The enemy's monsters were dubious patches of darkness upon the dark, and then no longer dubious

and so they crept out into distinctness The war correspondent, munching chocolate absent mindedly, beheld at last a spacious picture of battle under the cheerless sky, whose central focus was an array of fourteen or fifteen huge clumsy shapes lying in perspective on the very edge of the first line of trenches at intervals of perhaps three hundred yards and evidently firing down upon the crowded riflemen They were so close in that the defender's guns had ceased, and only the first line of trenches was in action

The second line commanded the first and as the light grew, the war correspondent could make out the riflemen who were fighting these monsters crouched in knots and crowds behind the transverse banks that crossed the trenches against the eventuality of an enfilade The trenches close to the big machines were empty save for the crumpled suggestions of dead and wounded men, the defenders had been driven right and left as soon as the prow of a land ironclad had loomed up over the front of the trench The war correspondent produced his field glass and was immediately a centre of inquiry from the soldiers about him

They wanted to look, they asked questions and after he had announced that the men across the traverses seemed unable to advance or retreat and were crouching under cover rather than fighting he found it advisable to loan his glasses to a burly and incredulous corporal He heard a strident voice and found a lean and sallow soldier at his back talking to the artist

"There's chaps down there caught," the man was saying "If they retreat they got to expose themselves, and the fire's too straight "

"They aren't firing much, but every shot's a hit"

"Who?"

"*The chaps in that thing* The men who're coming up——"

"Coming up where?"

"We're evacuating them trenches where we can

Our chaps are coming back up the zigzags No end of 'em hit But when we get clear our turn'll come Rather! Those things won't be able to cross a trench or get into it, and before they can get back our guns ll smash em up Smash 'em right up See?" A brightness came into his eyes "Then we'll have a go at the beggars inside,' he said

The war correspondent thought for a moment, try ing to realise the idea Then he set himself to recover his field glasses from the burly corporal

The daylight was getting clearer now The clouds were lifting and a gleam of lemon yellow amidst the level masses to the east portended sunrise He looked again at the land ironclad As he saw it in the bleak, grey dawn, lying obl qu ely upon the slope and on the very lip of the foremost trench the suggestion of a stranded vessel was very strong indeed It might have been from eighty to a hundred feet long—it was about two hundred and fifty yards away—its vertical side was ten feet high or so, smooth for that height, and then with a complex patterning under the eaves of its flattish turtle cover This patterning was a close inter lacing of port holes rifle barrels and telescope tubes—sham and real—indistinguishable one from the other The thing had come into such a position as to enfilade the trench, which was empty now, so far as he could see except for two or three crouching knots of men and the tumbled dead Behind it, across the plain, it had scored the grass with a train of linked impressions, like the dotted tracings sea things leave in sand Left and right of that track dead men and wounded men were scattered—men it had picked off as they fled back from their advanced positions in the search light glare from the invader's lines And now it lay with its head projecting a little over the trench it had won, as if it were a single sentient thing planning the next phase of its attack

He lowered his glasses and took a more comprehen

tive view of the situation. These creatures of the night had evidently won the first line of trenches and the fight had come to a pause. In the increasing light he could make out by a stray shot or a chance exposure that the defender's marksmen were lying thick in the second and third line of trenches up towards the low crest of the position, and in such of the zigzags as gave them a chance of a converging fire. The men about him were talking of guns. "We're in the line of the big guns at the crest, but they'll soon start one to pepper them," the lean man said, reassuringly.

"Whup," said the corporal.

"Bang! bang! bang! Whirrrrrr!" it was a sort of nervous jump, and all the rifles were going off by themselves. The war correspondent found himself and the artist, two idle men crouching behind a line of preoccupied backs, of industrious men discharging magazines. The monster had moved. It continued to move regardless of the hail that splashed its skin with bright new specks of lead. It was singing a mechanical little ditty to itself, "Tuf-tuf, tuf-tuf, tuf-tuf," and squirting out little jets of steam behind. It had humped itself up, as a limpet does before it crawls; it had lifted its skirt and displayed along the length of it—*feet!* They were thick, stumpy feet, between knobs and buttons in shape—flat, broad things, reminding one of the feet of elephants or the legs of caterpillars; and then, as the skirt rose higher, the war correspondent, scrutinising the thing through his glasses again, saw that these feet hung, as it were, on the rims of wheels. His thoughts whirled back to Victoria Street, Westminster, and he saw himself in the piping times of peace, seeking matter for an interview.

"Mr.—Mr. Diplock," he said; and he called them Pedrails. . . . Fancy meeting them here!"

The marksman beside him raised his head and shoulders in a speculative mood to fire more certainly—it seemed so natural to assume the attention of the

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appeared for a space, and instead was one of a narrow passage, crowded with men, for the most part receding, though one or two turned or halted. He never turned back to see the nose of the monster creeping over the brow of the trench; he never even troubled to keep in touch with the artist. He heard the "whit" of bullets about him soon enough, and saw a man before him stumble and drop, and then he was one of a furious crowd fighting to get into a transverse zigzag ditch *that enabled the defenders to get under cover up and* down the hill. It was like a theatre panic. He gathered from signs and fragmentary words that on ahead another of these monsters had also won to the second trench.

He lost his interest in the general course of the battle for a space altogether; he became simply a modest egotist, in a mood of hasty circumspection, seeking the farthest rear, amidst a dispersed multitude of disconcerted riflemen similarly employed. He scrambled down through trenches, he took his courage in both hands and sprinted across the open, he had moments of panic when it seemed madness not to be quadrupedal, and moments of shame when he stood up and faced about to see how the fight was going. And he was one of many thousand very similar men that morning. On the ridge he halted in a knot of scrub, and was for a few minutes almost minded to stop and see things out.

The day was now fully come. The grey sky had changed to blue, and of all the cloudy masses of the dawn there remained only a few patches of dissolving fleeciness. The world below was bright and singularly clear. The ridge was not, perhaps, more than a hundred feet or so above *the general plain*, but in this flat region it sufficed to give the effect of extensive view. Away on the north side of the ridge, little and far, were the camps, the ordered wagons, all the gear of a big army, with officers galloping about and men doing

aimless things Here and there men were falling in, however, and the cavalry was forming up on the plain beyond the tents The bulk of men who had been in the trenches were still on the move to the rear, scattered like sheep without a shepherd over the farther slopes Here and there were little rallies and attempts to wait and do—something vague but the general drift was away from any concentration Here on the southern side was the elaborate lacework of trenches and defences, across which these iron turtles fourteen of them spread out over a line of perhaps three miles, were now advancing as fast as a man could trot and methodically shooting down and breaking up any persistent knots of resistance Here and there stood little clumps of men outflanked and unable to get away, showing the white flag, and the invader's cyclist infantry was advancing now across the open, in open order but unmolested to complete the work of the machines Surveyed at large, the defenders already looked a beaten army A mechanism that was effectually ironclad against bullets that could at a pinch cross a thirty foot trench, and that seemed able to shoot out rifle bullets with unerring precision was clearly an inevitable victor against anything but rivers precipices, and guns

He looked at his watch "Half past four! Lord! What things can happen in two hours Here's the whole blessed army being walked over, and at half-past two——

"And even now our blessed louts haven't done a thing with their guns!"

He scanned the ridge right and left of him with his glasses He turned again to the nearest land ironclad, advancing now obliquely to him and not three hundred yards away, and then scanned the ground over which he must retreat if he was not to be captured

"They'll do nothing," he said, and glanced again at the enemy

And then from far away to the left came the thud

of a gun, followed very rapidly by a rolling gun fire He hesitated and decided to stay

§ 5

The defender had relied chiefly upon his rifles in the event of an assault. His guns he kept concealed at various points upon and behind the ridge ready to bring them into action against any artillery preparations for an attack on the part of his antagonist The situation had rushed upon him with the dawn and by the time the gunners had their guns ready for motion, the land ironclads were already in among the foremost trenches There is a natural reluctance to fire into one's own broken men and many of the guns being intended simply to fight an advance of the enemy's artillery, were not in positions to hit anything in the second line of trenches After that the advance of the land ironclads was swift The defender general found himself suddenly called upon to invent a new sort of warfare, in which guns were to fight alone amidst broken and retreating infantry He had scarcely thirty minutes in which to think it out He did not respond to the call, and what happened that morning was that the advance of the land ironclads forced the fight, and each gun and battery made what play its circumstances dictated For the most part it was poor play

Some of the guns got in two or three shots some one or two, and the percentage of misses was unusually high The howitzers, of course did nothing The land ironclads in each case followed much the same tactics As soon as a gun came into play the monster turned itself almost end on, so as to minimise the chances of a square hit, and made not for the gun, but for the nearest point on its flank from which the gunners could be shot down Few of the hits scored were very effectual, only one of the things was dis-

abled, and that was the one that fought the three batteries attached to the brigade on the left wing Three that were hit *when close upon the guns were* clean shot through without being put out of action Our war correspondent did not see that one momentary arrest of the tide of victory on the left, he saw only the very ineffectual fight of half battery 96B close at hand upon his right This he watched some time beyond the margin of safety

Just after he heard the three batteries opening up upon his left he became aware of the thud of horses' hoofs from the sheltered side of the slope, and presently saw first one and then two other guns galloping into position along the northern side of the ridge well out of sight of the great bulk that was now creeping obliquely towards the crest and cutting up the lingering infantry beside it and below as it came

The half battery swung round into line—each gun describing its curve—halted, unlimbered, and prepared for action

"Bang!"

The land ironclad had become visible over the brow of the hill, and just visible as a long black back to the gunners It halted, as though it hesitated

The two remaining guns fired, and then their big antagonist had swung round and was in full view, end on, against the sky, coming at a rush

The gunners became frantic in their haste to fire again They were so near the war correspondent could see the expression of their excited faces through his field glass As he looked he saw a man drop, and realised for the first time that the ironclad was shooting

For a moment the big black monster crawled with an accelerated pace towards the furiously active gunners Then, as if moved by a generous impulse, it turned its full broadside to their attack, and scarcely forty yards away from them The war correspondent turned his field glass back to the gunners and perceived it was now

shooting down the men about the guns with the most deadly rapidity.

Just for a moment it seemed splendid, and then it seemed horrible. The gunners were dropping in heaps about their guns. To lay a hand on a gun was death. "Bang!" went the gun on the left at them, a useless miss, and that was the only second shot the hill battery fired. In another moment half a dozen surviving artillerymen were holding up their hands amidst a scattered muddle of dead and wounded men, and the fight was done.

The war correspondent hesitated between stopping in his scrub and waiting for an opportunity to surrender decently, or taking to an adjacent gully he had discovered. If he surrendered it was certain he would get no copy off, while, if he escaped, there were all sorts of chances. He decided to follow the gully, and take the first offer in the confusion beyond the camp of picking up a horse.

§ 4

Subsequent authorities have found fault with the first land ironclads in many particulars, but they served their purpose on the day of their appearance. They were essentially long, narrow, and very strong steel frameworks carrying the engines, and borne upon eight pairs of big pedrail wheels, each about ten feet in diameter, each a driving wheel and set upon long axles free to swivel round a common axis. This arrangement gave them the maximum of adaptability to the contours of the ground. They crawled level along the ground with one foot high upon a hillock and another deep in a depression, and they could hold themselves erect and steady sideways upon even a steep hillside. The engineers directed the engines under the command of the captain, who had look out points at small ports all round the upper edge of the adjustable

-bled, and that was the one that fought the three batteries attached to the brigade on the left wing. Three that were hit when close upon the guns were clean shot through without being put out of action. Our war correspondent didn't see that one momentary arrest of the tide of victory on the left, he saw only *the very ineffectual fight of half battery 96B* close at hand upon his right. This he watched some time beyond the margin of safety.

Just after he heard the three batteries opening up upon his left he became aware of the thud of horses' hoofs from the sheltered side of the slope, and presently *saw first one and then two other guns galloping into* position along the right side of the ridge, well out of sight of the great bulk that was now creeping obliquely *towards* the crest and cutting up the lingering infantry beside it and below as it came.

The half battery swung round into line—each gun describing its curve—halted, unlimbered, and prepared for action.

"Bang!"

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swung to correspond, and the picture passed to and fro like an agitated panorama. When he saw a man he wanted to shoot he brought him up to the cross-lines, and then pressed a finger upon a little push like an electric bell push, conveniently placed in the centre of the knob. Then the man was shot. If by any chance the rifleman missed his target he moved the knob a trifle, or readjusted his dividers, pressed the push, and got him the second time.

This rifle and its sights protruded from a porthole, exactly like a great number of other port-holes that ran in a triple row under the eaves of the cover of the land ironclad. Each port-hole displayed a rifle and sight in dummy, so that the real ones could only be hit by a chance shot, and if one was, then the young man below said "Pshaw!" turned on an electric light, lowered the injured instrument into his camera, replaced the injured part, or put up a new rifle if the injury was considerable.

You must conceive these cabins as hung clear above the swing of the axles, and inside the big wheels upon which the great elephant-like feet were hung, and behind these cabins along the centre of the monster ran a central gallery into which they opened, and along which worked the big compact engines. It was like a long passage into which this throbbing machinery had been packed, and the captain stood about the middle, close to the ladder that led to his conning tower, and directed the silent, alert engineers—for the most part by signs. The throb and noise of the engines mingled with the reports of the rifles and the intermittent clangour of the bullet hail upon the armour. Ever an- [illegible] again with orders. Two small electric lights were all the illumination of this space—they were placed to make him most clearly visible to his subordinates the

skirt of twelve inch iron plating which protected the whole affair, and who could also raise or depress a conning tower set about the port holes through the centre of the iron top cover The riflemen each occupied a small cabin of peculiar construction, and these cabins were slung along the sides of and before and behind the great main framework in a manner suggestive of the slinging of the seats of an Irish jaunting car Their rifles however were very different pieces of apparatus from the simple mechanisms in the hands of their adversaries

These were in the first place automatic, ejected their cartridges and loaded again from a magazine each time they fired, until the ammunition store was at an end and they had the most remarkable sights imaginable, sights which threw a bright little camera obscura picture into the light tight box in which the rifleman sat below This camera obscura picture was marked with two crossed lines and whatever was covered by the intersection of these two lines that the rifle hit The sighting was ingeniously contrived The rifleman stood at the table with a thing like an elaboration of a draughtsman s dividers in his hand, and he opened and closed these dividers, so that they were always at the apparent height—if it was an ordinary sized man—of the man he wanted to kill A little twisted strand of wire like an electric light wire ran from this implement up to the gun, and as the dividers opened and shut the sights went up or down Changes in the clearness of the atmosphere due to changes of moisture, were met by an ingenious use of that meteorologically sensitive substance catgut, and when the land ironclad moved forward the sights got a compensatory deflection in the direction of its motion The rifleman stood up in his pitch dark chamber and watched the little picture before him One hand held the dividers for judging distance, and the other grasped a big knob like a door handle As he pushed this knob about the rifle above

it like sensible men?" They resented the assumption that their own side was too stupid to do anything more than play their enemy's game, that they were going to play this costly folly according to the rules of unimaginative men. They resented being forced to the trouble of making man-killing machinery; resented the alternative of having to massacre these people or endure their truculent yappings; resented the whole unfathomable imbecility of war.

Meanwhile, with something of the mechanical precision of a good clerk posting a ledger, the riflemen moved their knobs and pressed their buttons....

The captain of Land Ironclad Number Three had halted on the crest close to his captured half-battery. His lined-up prisoners stood hard by and waited for the cyclists behind to come for them. He surveyed the victorious morning through his conning tower.

He read the general's signals. "Five and Four are to keep among the guns to the left and prevent any attempt to recover them. Seven and Eleven and Twelve, stick to the guns you have got; Seven, get into position to command the guns taken by Three. Then we're to do something else, are we? Six and One quicken up to about ten miles an hour and walk round behind that camp to the levels near the river—we shall bag the whole crowd of them," interjected the young man. "Ah, here we are! Two and Three, Eight and Nine, Thirteen and Fourteen, space out to a thousand yards, wait for the word, and then go slowly to cover the advance of the cyclist infantry against any charge of mounted troops. That's all right. But where's Ten? Halloa! Ten to repair and get movable as soon as possible. They've broken up Ten!"

The discipline of the new war machines was business-like rather than pedantic, and the head of the captain came down out of the conning tower to tell his men. "I say, you chaps there. They've broken up Ten. Not badly, I think, but anyhow, he's stuck."

But that still left thirteen of the monsters in action to finish up the broken army

The war correspondent stealing down his gully looked back and saw them all lying along the crest and talking fluttering congratulatory flags to one another Their iron sides were shining golden in the light of the rising sun

§ 5

The private adventures of the war correspondent terminated in surrender about one o clock in the afternoon, and by that time he had stolen a horse, pitched off it, and narrowly escaped being rolled upon, found the brute had broken its leg and shot it with his revolver He had spent some hours in the company of a squad of dispirited riflemen had quarrelled with them about topography at last and gone off by himself in a direction that should have brought him to the banks of the river and didn t Moreover he had eaten all his chocolate and found nothing in the whole world to drink Also it had become extremely hot From behind a broken but attractive stone wall he had seen far away in the distance the defender horsemen trying to charge cyclists in open order, with land ironclads outflanking them on either side He had discovered that cyclists could retreat over open turf before horsemen with a sufficient margin of speed to allow of frequent dismounts and much terribly effective sharpshooting and he had a sufficient persuasion that those horsemen having charged their hearts out, had halted just beyond his range of vision and surrendered He had been urged to sudden activity by a forward movement of one of those machines that had threatened to enfilade his wall He had discovered a fearful blister on his heel

He was now in a scrubby gravelly place, sitting down and meditating on his pocket handkerchief, which had in some extraordinary way become in the last twenty

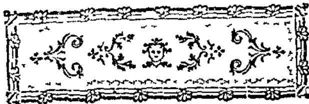
four hours extremely ambiguous in hue "It's the whitest thing I've got," he said

He had known all along that the enemy was east, west, and south of him, but when he heard land ironclads Numbers One and Six talking in their measured, deadly way not half a mile to the north he decided to make his own little unconditional peace without any further risks He was for hoisting his white flag to a bush and taking up a position of modest obscurity near it until some one came along He became aware of voices, clatter, and the distinctive noises of a body of horse, quite near, and he put his handkerchief in his pocket again and went to see what was going forward

The sound of firing ceased, and then as he drew near he heard the deep sounds of many simple, coarse, but hearty and noble hearted soldiers of the old school swearing with vigour

He emerged from his scrub upon a big level plain and far away a fringe of trees marked the banks of the river

In the centre of the picture was a still intact road bridge, and a big railway bridge a little to the right Two land ironclads rested, with a general air of being long harmless sheds in a pose of anticipatory peacefulness right and left of the picture completely commanding two miles and more of the river levels Emerged and halted a few yards from the scrub was the remainder of the defender's cavalry dusty a little disordered and obviously annoyed but still a very fine show of men In the middle distance three or four men and horses were receiving medical attendance and nearer a knot of officers regarded the distant novelties in mechanism with profound distaste Every one was very distinctly aware of the twelve other ironclads and of the multitude of townsmen soldiers on bicycles or afoot, encumbered now by prisoners and captured war gear but otherwise thoroughly effective, who were sweeping like a great net in their rear



STORY THE FIFTH

The Beautiful Suit

THERE was once a little man whose mother made him a beautiful suit of clothes It was green and gold, and woven so that I cannot describe how delicate and fine it was and there was a tie of orange fluffiness that tied up under his chin And the buttons in their newness shone like stars He was proud and pleased by his suit beyond measure, and stood before the long looking glass when first he put it on, so astonished and delighted with it that he could hardly turn himself away

He wanted to wear it everywhere, and show it to all sorts of people He thought over all the places he had ever visited, and all the scenes he had ever heard described and tried to imagine what the feel of it would be if he were to go now to those scenes and places wearing his shining suit, and he wanted to go out forthwith into the long grass and the hot sunshine of the meadow wearing it Just to wear it! But his mother told him "No" She told him he must take great care of his suit, for never would he have another nearly so fine he must save it and save it, and only wear it on rare and great occasions It was his wedding suit, she said And she took the buttons and

[illegible]

[illegible] to them [illegible]

[illegible] hand to shadow it [illegible] And [illegible]

[illegible] for its colours [illegible]

such occasions, he brushed it over and folded it exquisitely as she had taught him and put it away again

Now all these restrictions his mother set to the wearing of his suit he obeyed, always he obeyed them, until one strange night he woke up and saw the moonlight shining outside his window It seemed to him the moonlight was not common moonlight, nor the night a common night, and for awhile he lay quite drowsily, with this odd persuasion in his mind Thought joined on to thought like things that whisper warmly in the shadows Then he sat up in his little bed suddenly very alert, with his heart beating very fast, and a quiver in his body from top to toe He had made up his mind He knew that now he was going to wear his suit as it should be worn He had no doubt in the matter He was afraid, terribly afraid but glad, glad

He got out of his bed and stood for a moment by the window looking at the moonshine flooded garden, and trembling at the thing he meant to do The air was full of a minute clamour of crickets and murmurings, of the infinitesimal shoutings of little living things He went very gently across the creaking boards, for fear that he might wake the sleeping house to the big dark clothes press wherein his beautiful suit lay folded, and he took it out garment by garment, and softly and very eagerly tore off its tissue paper covering and its tacked protections until there it was, perfect and delightful as he had seen it when first his mother had given it to him—a long time it seemed ago Not a button had tarnished, not a thread had faded on this dear suit of his, he was glad enough for weeping as in a noiseless hurry he put it on And then back he went, soft and quick, to the window that looked out upon the garden, and stood there for a minute, shining in the moonlight, with his buttons twinkling like stars before he got out on the sill, and making as little of a rustling as he could clambered down to the garden

path below He stood before his mother's house, and it was white and nearly as plain as by day, with every window blind but his own shut like an eye that sleeps The trees cast still shadows like intricate black lace upon the wall

The garden in the moonlight was very different from the garden by day; moonshine was tangled in the hedges and stretched in phantom cobwebs from spray to spray Every flower was gleaming white or crimson black, and the air was a quiver with the thridding of small crickets and nightingales singing unseen in the depths of the trees

There was no darkness in the world but only warm mysterious shadows and all the leaves and spikes were edged and lined with iridescent jewels of dew The night was warmer than any night had ever been, the heavens by some miracle at once vaster and nearer and, spite of the great ivory tinted moon that ruled the world, the sky was full of stars

The little man did not shout nor sing for all his infinite gladness He stood for a time like one awe stricken, and then, with a queer small cry and holding out his arms, he ran out as if he would embrace at once the whole round immensity of the world He did not follow the neat set paths that cut the garden squarely, but thrust across the beds and through the wet, tall, scented herbs, through the night stock and the nicotine and the clusters of phantom white mallow *flowers and through the thickets of southernwood and* lavender, and knee deep across a wide space of mignon ette He came to the great hedge, and he thrust his way through it, and though the thorns of the brambles scored him deeply and tore threads from his won derful suit, and though burrs and goose grass and havers caught and clung to him, he did not care He did not care, for he knew it was all part of the wear ing for which he had longed "I am glad I put on my suit," he said, "I am glad I wore my suit"

Beyond the hedge he came to the duck pond, or at least to what was the duck pond by day But by night it was a great bowl of silver moonshine all noisy with singing frogs of wonderful silver moonshine twisted and clotted with strange patternings and the little man ran down into its waters between the thin black rushes, knee deep and waist deep and to his shoulders smiting the water to black and shining wavelets with either hand, swaying and shivering wavelets amidst which the stars were netted in the tangled reflections of the brooding trees upon the bank He waded until he swam, and so he crossed the pond and came out upon the other side, trailing as it seemed to him not duckweed but very silver in long, clinging dripping masses And up he went through the transfigured tangles of the willow herb and the uncut seeding grasses of the farther bank He came glad and breathless into the high road "I am glad" he said "beyond measure, that I had clothes that fitted this occasion"

The high road ran straight as an arrow flies, straight into the deep blue pit of sky beneath the moon, a white and shining road between the singing nightingales, and along it he went running now and leaping and now walking and rejoicing, in the clothes his mother had made for him with tireless, loving hands The road was deep in dust but that for him was only soft whiteness, and as he went a great dim moth came fluttering round his wet and shimmering and hastening figure At first he did not heed the moth, and then he waved his hands at it, and made a sort of dance with it as it circled round his head "Soft moth" he cried, "dear moth! And wonderful night, wonderful night of the world! Do you think my clothes are beautiful dear moth? As beautiful as your scales and all this silver vesture of the earth and sky?"

And the moth circled closer and closer until at last its velvet wings just brushed his lips

And next morning they found him dead, with his

neck broken, in the bottom of the stone pit, with his beautiful clothes a little bloody and foul and stained with the duckweed from the pond. But his face was a face of such happiness that, had you seen it, you would have understood indeed how truly he had died happy, never knowing that cool and streaming silver for the duckweed in the pond.



STORY THE SIXTH

The Door in the Wall

§ 1

ONE confidential evening, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere, and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focused, shaded table light, the shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and me, and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from everyday realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. "He was mystifying!" I said, and then: "How well he did it! . . . It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well."

Afterwards as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible remi-

niscences by s ipposing they did in some way s ggest, present, convey—I hardly know which word to use—experiences it was otherwise impos ble to tell

Well I don t resort to *that explanation now* I have got over my intervening do lts I believe now as I believed at the moment of telling that Wallace d d to the very best of his ab lity strip the truth of his secret for me B t whether he himself sa v or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an inestimable privilege or the victim of a fantastic dream I cannot pretend to g ess Even the facts of his death wh ch ended my doubts for ever throw no l ght on that

That m ch the reader must ju dge for hi n elf

I forget now what chance comment or cr t c sm of mine moved so reticent a man to confide in n e He was I think defending himself aga nst an imp tation *of slackness and unrel abil ty I had made in relat n to* a great p l l c movement in wh ch he had d sapp nted me But he plunged suddenly ', I have he sa d 'a preoccupation——

"I know, he went on after a pause ' I have been negligent The fact is—it isn t a case of gho s or apparitions—b it—it s an odd thing to tell of Red mon l—I am haun e l I am haunted by someth ng—that rather takes the l ght out of things that fills me with long ngs "

He paused checked by that Engl sh shyness that so often overcomes us when we wo ild speak of moving or grave or bea tif l things Yo i were at Sa nt Aldl els an s all thro gh he sa d and for a moment that *seeme l to me q te irrelevant* Well —and he paused Then very halt ngly at first b t afterwards more eas ly he began to tell of the thing that was hi lden in his life the ha nt ng memory of a bea ty and a happ ness that filled his heart w th insatiable long ngs that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly l fe seem dull and ted ous and vain to him

Now that I have the clue to it, the thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him—a woman who had loved him greatly. "Suddenly," she said, "the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn't care a rap for you—under his very nose."

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was holding his attention on to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with successes. He left me behind him long ago; he soared up over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn't cut—anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort—as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Athelstan's College in West Kensington for almost all our school time. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the "Door in the Wall"—that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door, leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life quite early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of it. "There was," he said, "a crimson Virginia creeper in it—all one bright uniform crimson, in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember

how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green, you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year and I ought to know.

"If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old."

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy—he learned to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and "old-fashioned," as people say, that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was two, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention and expected great things of him. For all his brightness he found life grey and dull, I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to the door and open it and walk in. And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him—he could not tell which—to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning—unless memory has played him the queerest trick—that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too,

though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went in through that door

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets and making an infantile attempt to whistle strolled right along beyond the end of the wall There he recalls a number of mean dirty shops and particularly that of a plumber and decorator with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead ball taps, pattern books of wall paper, and tins of enamel He stood pretending to examine these things, and *coveting* passionately desiring the green door

Then he said he had a gust of emotion He made a run for it lest hesitation should grip him again, he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him And so, in a trice he came into the garden that has haunted all his life

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came

There was something in the very air of it that exhilarated that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well being there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad—as only in rare moments, and when one is young and joyful one can be glad in this world And everything was beautiful there

Wallace mused before he went on telling me "You see,' he said with the doubtful inflection of a man who pauses at incredible things "there were two great panthers there Yes spotted panthers And I was not afraid There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed It came right up to me rubbed its soft

round ear very gently against the small hand I held out, and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it was just like coming home.

"You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts. I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder happy little boy—in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway and came to meet me, smiling, and said 'Well?' to me, and lifted me and kissed me, and put me down and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad red steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves.

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with me. . . Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman, wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who carried a book, and beckoned and took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall—though my playmates were loth to have me go, and ceased their game and stood watching as I was carried away. 'Come back to us!' they cried. 'Come back to us soon!' I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born. . . .

"It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities."

Wallace paused gravely—looked at me doubtfully.

"Go on," I said. "I understand."

"They were realities—yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had near forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro. I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman's face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

"'And next?' I cried, and would have turned on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

"'Next?' I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over

she bent down upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow

"But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers nor the girl who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loth to let me go It showed a long grey street in West Kensington, in that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit, and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear playfellows who had called after me 'Come back to us! Come back to us soon!' I was there This was no page in a book, but harsh reality that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone—whither had they gone?"

He halted again, and remained for a time staring into the fire

"Oh! the woefulness of that return!" he murmured

"Well?" I said, after a minute or so

"Poor little wretch I was!—brought back to this grey world again! As I realised the fulness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful home coming remain with me still I see again the benevolent looking old gentleman in gold spectacles who stopped and spoke to me—prodding me first with his umbrella 'Poor little chap,' said he, 'and are you lost then?'—and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home Sobbing conspicuous, and frightened, I came back from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father's house

"That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden—the garden that haunts me still Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality that *difference* from

the common things of experience that hung about it all but that—that is what happened. If it was a dream I am sure it was a day time and altogether extraordinary dream. H'm!—naturally there followed a terrible questioning by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess—everyone.

"I tried to tell them and my father gave me my first thrashing *for telling lies. When afterwards I tried* to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, everyone was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my *fairy tale books were taken away from me for a time*—because I was too 'imaginative.' Eh? Yes, they did that! My father belonged to the old school. And my story was driven back upon myself. I whis*pered it to my pillow—my pillow that was often damp* and salt to my whispering lips with childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heartfelt request: 'Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take me back to my garden!' Take me back to my garden! I dreamt often of the garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know. All this you understand is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again."

I asked an obvious question.

"No," he said. "I don't remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn't till you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period—incredible as it seems now—when I forgot the garden altogether—when I was about eight or nine it may

have been Do you remember me as a kid at Saint Althelstan's?"

"Rather!"

"I didn't show any signs did I, in those days of having a secret dream?"

§ 2

He looked up with a sudden smile

"Did you ever play North West Passage with me? No, of course you didn't come my way!"

"It was the sort of game he went on "that every imaginative child plays all day The idea was the discovery of a North West Passage to school The way to school was plain enough the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working my way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal And one day I got entangled among some rather low class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a *cul de sac* and found a passage at the end I hurried through that with renewed hope 'I shall do it yet,' I said, and passed a row of frowsy little shops that were inexplicably familiar to me, *and behold! there was my long white wall* and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!

"The thing whacked upon me suddenly Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn't a dream!"

He paused

"I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child Anyhow, this second time I didn't for a moment think of going in straight away. You see—— For one thing, my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in

time—set on not breaking my record for punctuality I must surely have felt *some* little de[illegible] at least to try the door—yes I must have felt [illegible] But I seem to remember the attraction [illegible] mainly as another obstacle to my overmas[illegible] to get to school I was [illegible] dis covery I had made, of course [illegible] mind full of it—but I went on [illegible] I ran past, tugging out my watch, [illegible] nutes still to spare, and then I was [illegible] into familiar surroundings [illegible] got [illegible] it is true, and wet with perspiration, b[illegible] I can remember hanging up my coat and ha[illegible] Went right by it and left it behind me Odd eh?"

He looked at me thoughtfully "Of course I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there School boys have limited imaginations I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing to have it there, to know my way back to it, but there was the school tugging at me I expect I was a good deal distraught and in attentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career

"I didn't go that day at all The next day was a half holiday, and that may have weighed with me Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down im positions upon me, and docked the margin of time necessary for the *détour* I don't know What I do know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself

"I told—what was his name?—a ferrety looking youngster we used to call Squiff"

"Young Hopkins," said I

"Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him. I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

"Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing, and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett—you remember him?—and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were.

"A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw—you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?—who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green——'

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. "I pretended not to hear," he said. "Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar, and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to—and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby, though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened. I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the out-

come of it all was that instead of starting al ne for my enchanted garden, I led the way pre s -cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my s l ore burning misery and shame—for a par t six mocking, curious, and threatening schoolfe ws

"We never found the white wal and the green door "

"You mean——?"

"I mean I couldn't find it I w ld have f ind it if I could

"And afterwards when I could go a one I couldn't find it I never found it I seem now to ha e been always looking for it through my sch l b y days, but I never came upon it—never"

"Did the fellows—make it disagreeable?

"Beastly . Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbering But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden for the beautiful after noon I had hoped for for the sweet friendly women and the waiting playfellows and the game I had hoped to learn again that beautiful forgotten game

"I believed firmly that if I had not told——

I had bad times after that—crying at night and wool gathering by day For two terms I slacked and had bad reports Do you remember? Of course yo would! It was *you*—your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again"

§ 3

For a time my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire Then he said 'I never saw it again until I was seventeen

"It leaped upon me for the third time—as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a

scholarship I had just one momentary glimpse I was leaning over the apron of my hansom smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things

"We clattered by—I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner Then I had a queer moment a double and divergent movement of my will I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab and brought my arm down to pull out my watch 'Yes sir!' said the cabman, smartly 'Er—well—it's nothing,' I cried '*My* mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!' And he went on

"I got my scholarship And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise—his rare praise—and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe—the formidable bulldog of adolescence—and thought of that door in the long white wall 'If I had stopped' I thought, 'I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Oxford—muddled all the fine career before me! I begin to see things better!' I fell musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice

"Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very sweet to me very fine but remote My grip was fixing now upon the world I saw another door opening—the door of my career"

He stared again into the fire Its red light picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment and then it vanished again

'Well" he said and sighed, "I have served that career I have done—much work, much hard work but I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then Yes—four times For a while

this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity, that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something—and yet there have been disappointments....

"Twice I have been in love—I will not dwell on that—but once, as I went to someone who, I knew, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. '*Odd!*' said I to myself, '*but I thought* this place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow—like counting Stonehenge—the place of that queer daydream of mine.' And I went by *it intent* upon my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

"I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most—though I *was sure enough in my heart that it would open to me*—and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in which my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality—*I might at least have peeped in and waved a* hand to those panthers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry....

"Years of hard work after that and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork—perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has

gone out of things recently, and that just at a time—with all these new political developments—when I ought to be working Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly Yes—and I've seen it three times"

"The garden?"

"No—the door! And I haven't gone in!"

He leaned over the table to me with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke "Thrice I have had my chance—*thrice!* If ever that door offers itself to me again, I swore, I will go in, out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toil some futilities I will go and never return This time I will stay I swore it, and when the time came —*I didn't go*

"Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to enter Three times in the last year

"The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenants' Redemption Bill, on which the Government was saved by a majority of three You remember? No one on our side—perhaps very few on the opposite side—expected the end that night Then the debate collapsed like eggshells I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford, we were both unpaired, and we were called up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin's motor We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door—livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable 'My God!' cried I 'What?' said Hotchkiss 'Nothing!' I answered, and the moment passed,

"'I've made a great sacrifice,' I told the whip as I got in 'They all have,' he said, and hurried by

"I do not see how I could have done otherwise then And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father's bedside to bid that stern old man farewell Then, too, the claims of life were imperative But the third time

was different, it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs—it's no secret now, you know, that I've had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher's, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my place in the reconstructed Ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes—yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you.... Yes—thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

"Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs' presence. I was using the best power of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerned me. I had to. Ralphs' behaviour since has more than justified my caution.... Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometimes to resort to these little devices.... And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the green door before us down the road.

"We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralphs' as we sauntered past.

"I passed within twenty inches of the door. 'If I say good night to them, and go in,' I asked myself, '*what will happen?*' *And I was all a tingle for that* word with Gurker.

"I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. 'They will think me mad,' I thought. '*And suppose I vanish now!—Amazing dis*appearance of a prominent politician!' That weighed

with me A thousand inconceivably petty worldlinesses w d with me in that crisis '

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speak slowly ' Here I am' he said

' Here I am!" he repeated, "and my chance has gone from me Three times in one year the door has been offered me—the door that goes into peace, into delight into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know And I have rejected it, Red m n l and it has gone——"

' How do you know?"

"I know I know I am left now to work it out to stick to the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came You say I have success—this vulgar, tawdry irks me envied thing I have it" He had a walnut in his b g hand "If that was my success," he said and cr ed it, and held it out for me to see

"Let me tell you something Redmond This loss is destroying me For two months, for ten weeks nearly now I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties My soul is full of inappeasable regrets At nights—when it is less likely I shall be recognised—I go out I wander Yes I wonder what people would think of that if they knew A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all departments, wandering alone—grieving—sometimes near audibly lamenting—for a door, for a garden!"

§ 4

I can see now his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had come into his eyes I see him very vividly to night I sit recalling his words, his tones, and last evening's *Westminster Gazette* still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death At lunch to day the club was busy with his death We talked of nothing else

They found his body very early yesterday morning

in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connection with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way....

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night—he has frequently walked home during the past Session—and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious, if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had, in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something—I know not what—that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger, and death.

But did he see like that?



STORY THE SEVENTH

The Pearl of Love

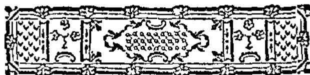
THE pearl is lovelier than the most brilliant of crystalline stones the moralist declares because it is made through the suffering of a living creature About that I can say nothing because I feel none of the fascination of pearls Their cloudy lustre moves me not at all Nor can I decide for myself upon that age long dispute whether The Pearl of Love is the cruellest of stories or only a gracious fable of the immortality of beauty

Both the story and the controversy will be familiar to students of mediæval Persian prose The story is a short one, though the commentary upon it is a respectable part of the literature of that period They have treated it as a poetic invention and they have treated it as an allegory meaning this that or the other thing Theologians have had their copious way with it, dealing with it particularly as concerning the restoration of the body after death and it has been greatly used as a parable by those who write about æsthetics And many have held it to be the statement of a fact, simply and baldly true

The story is laid in North India, which is the most fruitful soil for sublime love stories of all the lands in the world. It was in a country of sunshine and lakes and rich forests and hills and fertile valleys; and far away the great mountains hung in the sky, peaks, crests, and ridges of inaccessible and eternal snow. There was a young prince, lord of all the land; and he found a maiden of indescribable beauty and delightfulness and he made her his queen and laid his heart at her feet. Love was theirs, full of joys and sweetness, full of hope, exquisite, brave and marvellous love, beyond anything you have ever dreamt of love. It was theirs for a year and a part of a year; and then suddenly, because of some venomous sting that came to her in a thicket, she died.

She died, and for a while the prince was utterly prostrated. He was silent and motionless with grief. They feared he might kill himself, and he had neither sons nor brothers to succeed him. For two days and nights he lay upon his face, fasting, across the foot of the couch which bore her calm and lovely body. Then he arose and ate, and went about very quietly like one who has taken a great resolution. *He caused her body* to be put in a coffin of lead mixed with silver, and for that he had an outer coffin made of the most precious and scented woods wrought with gold, and about that there was to be a sarcophagus of alabaster, inlaid with precious stones. And while these things were being done he spent his time for the most part by the pools and in the garden houses and pavilions and groves and in those chambers in the palace where they two had been most together, brooding upon her loveliness. He did not rend his garments nor defile himself with ashes and sackcloth as the custom was, for his love was too great for such extravagances. At last he came forth again among his councillors and before the people, and told them what he had a mind to do.

He said he could never more touch woman, he could



STORY THE SEVENTH

The Pearl of Love

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war grar l y enough for the h a on of the prince

For by this time he was no lon er cf s h who had loved the girl queen H s a an grave and intent wh lly set upon the Pearl of Love With every year e ar it new possibilities in arch and wal an c l had acqu red grea er power over the mater a F use and he had learnt of a h ndr d s re l s and effects that he could never have th of the beginning His sense of c l r had gr n h r nd colder, he cared no more for the ena l ned brightness that had pleased him first the l n s of an illuminated missal he sought now for blue lour ings like the sky and for the s btle hues of reat distances, for recond te shadows and sudden br ad floods of purple opalescence and f r grandeur and space He wearied altogether of carvings and p ct res and inla d ornamentation and all the l ttle ca eful w rk of men "Those were pretty things he said of his earlier decorations and had them put as de n s bord nate build ngs where they wo ld not hamper his ma n design Greater and greater grew h s ar s ry With awe and amazement people saw the Pearl of L ve sweeping up from its first beg nn ngs to a s perh man breadth and height and magn ficence They d d not know clearly what they had expected b t never had they expected so sublime a thing as this " Won le ful are the miracles" they whispered that love can do" and all the women in the world, whatever other loves they had, loved the prince for the splendour of his devot on

Through the middle of the building ran a great aisle, a vista that the prince came to care for more and more From the inner entrance of the building he looked along the length of an immense pillared gallery and across the central area from which the rose hied

crl mns ha l long since vanished, over the top of the pavili n nder which lay the sarcophagus, through a marvell l designed opening to the snowy wilder nesses f the great mountain the lord of all mountains, two h n lred miles away The pillars and arches and b tre se and galleries soared and floated on either si le perfect yet unobtrusive, like great archangels wait in in the sl a lows about the presence of God When men saw that austere beauty for the first time they were exalted, and then they shivered and their hearts bowed down Very often would the prince come to stand there and look at that vista, deeply moved and not yet fully satisfied The Pearl of Love had still something for him to do, he felt before his task was done Always he would order some little alteration to be made or some recent alteration to be put back again And one day he said that the sarcophagus would be clearer and simpler without the pavilion, and after regarding it very steadfastly for a long time, he had the pavilion dismantled and removed

The next day he came and said nothing, and the next day and the next Then for two days he stayed away altogether Then he returned bringing with him an architect and two master craftsmen and a small retin e

All l o ed, standing together silently in a little group amidst tl e serene vastness of their achievement No trace of toil re nained in its perfection It was as if tl e God of nat ire's beauty had taken over their off spring to himself

Only one thing there was to mar the absolute har mony There was a certain disproportion about the sarcophagus It had never been enlarged, and indeed how cou d it have been enlarged since the early days? It challenged the eye, it nicked the streaming lines In that sarcopha us was the casket of lead and silver, ar l in the casket of lea l and silver was the queen, the dear immortal ca se of all this beauty But now that

sarcophagus seemed no more than a little dark oblong that lay incongruously in the great vista of the Pearl of Love It was as if someone had dropped a small valise upon the crystal sea of heaven

Long the prince mused, but no one knew the thoughts that passed through his mind

At last he spoke He pointed

"Take that thing away," he said



STORY THE EIGHTH

The Country of the Blind

THREE hundred miles and more from Chimborazo, one hundred from the snows of Cotopaxi in the wildest wastes of Ecuador's Andes there lies that mysterious mountain valley cut off from the world of men, the Country of the Blind Long years ago that valley lay so far open to the world that men might come at last through frightful gorges and over an icy pass into its equable meadows and thither indeed men came, a family or so of Peruvian half breeds fleeing from the lust and tyranny of an evil Spanish ruler Then came the stupendous outbreak of Mindobamba, when it was night in Quito for seventeen days, and the water was boiling at Yaguachi and all the fish floating dying even as far as Guayaquil, everywhere along the Pacific slopes there were landslips and swift thawings and sudden floods and one whole side of the old Arauca crest slipped and came down in thunder, and cut off the Country of the Blind for ever from the exploring feet of men Put one of these early settlers had chanced to be on the hither side of the gorges when the world had so terribly shaken itself, and he perforce had to

forget his wife and his child and all the friends and possessions he had left up there and start life over again in the lower world He started it again but ill blindness overtook him, and he died of punishment in the mines, but the story he told begot a legend that lingers along the length of the Cordilleras of the Andes to this day

He told of his reason for venturing back from that fastness, into which he had first been carried lashed to a llama, beside a vast bale of gear when he was a child The valley, he said, had in it all that the heart of man could desire—sweet water, pasture, and even climate, slopes of rich brown soil with tangles of a shrub that bore an excellent fruit, and on one side great hanging forests of pine that held the avalanches high *Far overhead, on three sides vast cliffs of grey* green rock were capped by cliffs of ice but the glacier stream came not to them but flowed away by the farther slopes, and only now and then huge ice masses fell on the valley side In this valley it neither rained nor snowed, but the abundant springs gave a rich green pasture, that irrigation would spread over all the valley space The settlers did well indeed there Their beasts did well and multiplied and but one thing marred their happiness Yet it was enough to mar it greatly A strange disease had come upon them, and had made all the children born to them there—and indeed, several older children also—blind It was to seek some *charm or antidote* against this plague of blindness that he had with fatigue and danger and difficulty returned down the gorge In those days, in such cases men did not think of germs and infections but of sins and it seemed to him that the reason of this affliction must lie in the negligence of these priestless immigrants to set up a shrine so soon as they entered the valley He wanted a shrine—a handsome, cheap effectual shrine—to be erected in the valley he wanted relics and such like potent things of faith, blessed

shelf of rock and with a touch of real dramatic power, how presently they found Nune had gone from them They shouted and there was no reply, shouted and whistled, and for the rest of that night they slept no more

As the morning broke they saw the traces of his fall It seems impossible he could have uttered a sound He had slipped eastward towards the unknown side of the mountain far below he had struck a steep slope of snow, and ploughed his way down it in the midst of a snow avalanche His track went straight to the edge of a frightful precipice and beyond that everything was hidden Far, far below and hazy with distance they could see trees rising out of a narrow shut in valley—the lost Country of the Blind But they did not know it was the lost Country of the Blind, nor distinguish it in any way from any other narrow streak of upland valley Unnerved by this disaster they abandoned their attempt in the afternoon, and Pointer was called away to the war before he could make another attack To this day Parascotopetl lifts an unconquered crest, and Pointer's shelter crumbles unvisited amidst the snows

And the man who fell survived

At the end of the slope he fell a thousand feet, and came down in the midst of a cloud of snow upon a snow slope even steeper than the one above Down this he was whirled, stunned and insensible, but without a bone broken in his body and then at last came to gentler slopes, and at last rolled out and lay still, buried amidst a softening heap of the white masses that had accompanied and saved him He came to himself with a dim fancy that he was ill in bed, then realised his position with a mountaineer's intelligence, and worked himself loose and, after a rest or so, out until he saw the stars He rested flat upon his chest for a space, wondering where he was and what had happened to him He explored his limbs, and discovered that

several of his buttons were gone and his coat turned over his head His knife had gone from his pocket and his hat was lost, though he had tied it under his chin He recalled that he had been looking for loose stones to raise his piece of the shelter wall His ice axe had disappeared

He decided he must have fallen and looked up to see, exaggerated by the ghastly light of the rising moon, the tremendous flight he had taken For a while he lay, gazing blankly at that vast pale cliff towering above, rising moment by moment out of a subsiding tide of darkness Its phantasmal mysterious beauty held him for a space, and then he was seized with a paroxysm of sobbing laughter

After a great interval of time he became aware that he was near the lower edge of the snow Below, down what was now a moonlit and practicable slope, he saw the dark and broken appearance of rock strewn turf He struggled to his feet, aching in every joint and limb, got down painfully from the heaped loose snow about him went downward until he was on the turf, and there dropped rather than lay beside a boulder, drank deep from the flask in his inner pocket, and instantly fell asleep

He was awakened by the singing of birds in the trees far below

He sat up and perceived he was on a little alp at the foot of a vast precipice that was grooved by the gully down which he and his snow had come Over against him another wall of rock reared itself against the sky The gorge between these precipices ran east and west and was full of the morning sunlight which lit to the westward the mass of fallen mountain that closed the descending gorge Below him it seemed there was a precipice equally steep, but behind the snow in the gully he found a sort of chimney cleft dripping with snow water down which a desperate man might venture He found it easier than it seemed

and came at last to another desolate alp, and then after a rock climb of no particular difficulty to a steep slope of trees He took his bearings and turned his face up the gorge, for he saw it opened out above upon green meadows among which he now glimpsed quite distinctly a cluster of stone huts of unfamiliar fashion At times his progress was like clambering along the face of a wall and after a time the rising sun ceased to strike along the gorge, the voices of the singing birds died away, and the air grew cold and dark about him But the distant valley with its houses was all the brighter for that He came presently to talus, and among the rocks he noted—for he was an observant man—an unfamiliar fern that seemed to clutch out of the crevices with intense green hands He picked a frond or so and gnawed its stalk and found it helpful

About midday he came at last out of the throat of the gorge into the plain and the sunlight He was stiff and weary, he sat down in the shadow of a rock, filled up his flask with water from a spring and drank it down, and remained for a time resting before he went on to the houses

They were very strange to his eyes, and indeed the whole aspect of that valley became, as he regarded it, queerer and more unfamiliar The greater part of its surface was lush green meadow, starred with many beautiful flowers, irrigated with extraordinary care, and bearing evidence of systematic cropping piece by piece High up and ringing the valley about was a wall, and what appeared to be a circumferential water-channel, from which the little trickles of water that fed the meadow plants came, and on the higher slopes above this flocks of llamas cropped the scanty herbage Sheds, apparently shelters or feeding places for the llamas, stood against the boundary wall here and there The irrigation streams ran together into a main channel down the centre of the valley, and this was enclosed

on either side by a wall breast high This gave a singularly urban quality to this secluded place, a quality that was greatly enhanced by the fact that a number of paths paved with black and white stones, and each with a curious little kerb at the side, ran hither and thither in an orderly manner The houses of the central village were quite unlike the casual and higgledy piggledy agglomeration of the mountain villages he knew, they stood in a continuous row on either side of a central street of astonishing clearness, here and there their parti coloured façade was pierced by a door, and not a solitary window broke their even frontage They were parti-coloured with extraordinary irregularity, smeared with a sort of plaster that was sometimes grey, sometimes drab sometimes slate coloured or dark brown, and it was the sight of this wild plastering first brought the word "blind" into the thoughts of the explorer "The good man who did that," he thought, "must have been as blind as a bat"

He descended a steep place, and so came to the wall and channel that ran about the valley, near where the latter spouted out its surplus contents into the deeps of the gorge in a thin and wavering thread of cascade He could now see a number of men and women resting on piled heaps of grass, as if taking a siesta in the remoter part of the meadow and nearer the village a number of recumbent children, and then nearer at hand three men carrying pails on yokes along a little path that ran from the encircling wall towards the houses These latter were clad in garments of llama cloth and boots and belts of leather and they wore caps of cloth with back and ear flaps They followed one another in single file, walking slowly and yawning as they walked like men who have been up all night There was something so reassuringly prosperous and respectable in their bearing that after a moment's hesitation Nunez stood forward as conspicuously as possible

upon his rock, and gave vent to a mighty shout that echoed round the valley

The three men stopped, and moved their heads as though they were looking about them They turned their faces this way and that and Nunez gesticulated with freedom But they did not appear to see him for all his gestures, and after a time, directing themselves towards the mountains far away to the right, they shouted as if in answer Nunez bawled again, and then once more, and as he gestured ineffectually the word 'blind came up to the top of his thoughts "The fools must be blind," he said

When at last, after much shouting and wrath, Nunez crossed the stream by a little bridge, came through a gate in the wall, and approached them, he was sure that they were blind He was sure that this was the Country of the Blind of which the legends told Conviction had sprung upon him, and a sense of great and rather enviable adventure The three stood side by side, not looking at him, but with their ears directed towards him, judging him by his unfamiliar steps They stood close together like men a little afraid, and he could see their eyelids closed and sunken, as though the very balls beneath had shrunk away There was an expression near awe on their faces

"A man," one said, in hardly recognisable Spanish —"a man it is—a man or a spirit—coming down from the rocks"

But Nunez advanced with the confident steps of a youth who enters upon life All the old stories of the lost valley and the Country of the Blind had come back to his mind, and through his thoughts ran this old proverb, as if it were a refrain—

"In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King"

"In the Country of the Blind the One eyed Man is King"

And very civilly he gave them greeting He talked to them and used his eyes

"Where does he come from, brother Pedro?" asked one

"Down out of the rocks"

"Over the mountains I come" said Nunez, "out of the country beyond there—where men can see From near Bogota, where there are a hundred thousands of people, and where the city passes out of sight"

"Sight?" muttered Pedro "Sight?

"He comes," said the second blind man, "out of the rocks"

The cloth of their coats Nunez saw was curiously fashioned, each with a different sort of stitching

They startled him by a simultaneous movement towards him, each with a hand outstretched He stepped back from the advance of these spread fingers

"Come hither," said the third blind man, following his motion and clutching him neatly

And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so

"*Carefully*," *he cried, with a finger in his eye, and* found they thought that organ, with its fluttering lids, a queer thing in him They went over it again

"A strange creature, Correa," said the one called Pedro "Feel the coarseness of his hair Like a llama's hair"

"Rough he is as the rocks that begot him,' said Correa, investigating Nunez's unshaven chin with a soft and slightly moist hand "Perhaps he will grow finer" Nunez struggled a little under their examination, but they gripped him firm

"Carefully," he said again

"He speaks," said the third man "Certainly he is a man"

"Ugh!" said Pedro, at the roughness of his coat

"And you have come into the world?' asked Pedro

"*Out* of the world Over mountains and glaciers

right over above there, half way to the sun Out of the great big world that goes down, twelve days' journey to the sea"

They scarcely seemed to heed him "Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature said Correa "It is the warmth of things and moisture and rottenness—rottenness'

"Let us lead him to the elders' said Pedro

"Shout first,' said Correa, "lest the children be afraid This is a marvellous occasion"

So they shouted, and Pedro went first and took Nunez by the hand to lead him to the houses

He drew his hand away "I can see," he said

"See? said Correa

"Yes see,' said Nunez, turning towards him, and stumbled against Pedro's pail

"His senses are still imperfect," said the third blind man "He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words Lead him by the hand

"As you will,' said Nunez, and was led along laughing

It seemed they knew nothing of sight

Well, all in good time he would teach them

He heard people shouting, and saw a number of figures gathering together in the middle roadway of the village

He found it tax his nerve and patience more than he had anticipated, that first encounter with the population of the Country of the Blind The place seemed larger as he drew near to it, and the smeared plasterings queerer, and a crowd of children and men and women (the women and girls, he was pleased to note, had some of them quite sweet faces, for all that their eyes were shut and sunken) came about him, holding on to him, touching him with soft, sensitive hands, smelling at him, and listening at every word he spoke Some of the maidens and children, however, kept aloof as if afraid, and indeed his voice seemed

roarse and rude beside their softer notes. They mobbed him. His three guides kept close to him with an effect of proprietorship, and said again and again, "A wild man out of the rocks."

"Bogota," he said. "Bogota. Over the mountain crests."

"A wild man—using wild words," said Pedro. "Did you hear that—*Bogota?* His mind is hardly formed yet. He has only the beginnings of speech."

A little boy nipped his hand. "Bogota!" he said mockingly.

"Ay! A city to your village. I come from the great world—where men have eyes and see."

"His name's Bogota," they said.

"He stumbled," said Correa, "stumbled twice as we came hither."

"Bring him to the elders."

And they thrust him suddenly through a doorway into a room as black as pitch, save at the end there faintly glowed a fire. The crowd closed in behind him and shut out all but the faintest glimmer of day, and before he could arrest himself he had fallen headlong over the feet of a seated man. His arm, outflung, struck the face of someone else as he went down; he felt the soft impact of features and heard a cry of anger, and for a moment he struggled against a number of hands that clutched him. It was a one-sided fight. An inkling of the situation came to him and he lay quiet.

"I fell down," he said; "I couldn't see in this pitchy darkness."

There was a pause as if the unseen persons about him tried to understand his words. Then the voice of Correa said: "He is but newly formed. He stumbles as he walks and mingles words that mean nothing with his speech."

Others also said things about him that he heard or understood imperfectly.

"May I sit up?" he asked, in a pause "I will not struggle against you again"

They consulted and let him rise

The voice of an older man began to question him, and Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and sight and such like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind And they would believe and understand nothing whatever he told them, a thing quite outside his expectation They would not even understand many of his words For fourteen generations these people had been blind and cut off from all the seeing world, the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed, the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child's story, and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall Blind men of genius had arisen among them and questioned the shreds of belief and tradition they had brought with them from their seeing days, and had dismissed all these things as idle fancies, and replaced them with new and saner explanations Much of their imagination had shrivelled with their eyes, and they had made for themselves new imaginations with their ever more sensitive ears and finger tips *Slowly Nunez realised this, that his expectation of* wonder and reverence at his origin and his gifts was not to be borne out, and after his poor attempt to explain sight to them had been set aside as the confused version of a new made being describing the marvels of his incoherent sensations, he subsided, a little dashed, into listening to their instruction And the eldest of the blind men explained to him life and philosophy and religion, how that the world (meaning their valley) had been first an empty hollow in the rocks and then had come, first, inanimate things without the gift of touch, and llamas and a few other creatures that had little sense, and then men, and at

last angels, whom one could hear singing and making fluttering sounds, but whom no one could touch at all, which puzzled Nunez greatly until he thought of the birds

He went on to tell Nunez how this time had been divided into the warm and the cold which are the blind equivalents of day and night, and how it was good to sleep in the warm and work during the cold, so that now, but for his advent, the whole town of the blind would have been asleep He said Nunez must have been specially created to learn and serve the wisdom they had acquired, and for that all his mental incoherency and stumbling behaviour he must have courage, and do his best to learn and at that all the people in the doorway murmured encouragingly He said the night—for the blind call their day night—was now far gone, and it behooved every one to go back to sleep He asked Nunez if he knew how to sleep, and Nunez said he did, but that before sleep he wanted food

They brought him food—llama's milk in a bowl, and rough salted bread—and led him into a lonely place to eat out of their hearing and afterwards to slumber until the chill of the mountain evening roused them to begin their day again But Nunez slumbered not at all

Instead, he sat up in the place where they had left him, resting his limbs and turning the unanticipated circumstances of his arrival over and over in his mind

Every now and then he laughed sometimes with amusement, and sometimes with indignation

"Unformed mind!" he said "Got no senses yet! They little know they've been insulting their heaven sent king and master I see I must bring them to reason Let me think—let me think"

He was still thinking when the sun set

Nunez had an eye for all beautiful things, and it seemed to him that the glow upon the snowfields and

glaciers that rose about the valley on every side was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen His eyes went from that inaccessible glory to the village and irrigated fields fast sink ng into the twilight, and sud denly a wave of emotion took him, and he thanked God from the bottom of his heart that the power of sight had been given him

He heard a voice calling to him from out of the village

"Ya ho there, Bogota! Come hither!"

At that he stood up smiling He would show these people once and for all what sight would do for a man They would seek him, but not find him

"You move not, Bogota,' said the voice

He laughed noiselessly, and made two stealthy steps aside from the path

"Trample not on the grass, Bogota, that is not allowed"

Nunez had scarcely heard the sound he made him self He stopped amazed

The owner of the voice came running up the piebald path towards him

He stepped back into the pathway "Here I am," he said

"Why did you not come when I called you?" said the blind man "Must you be led like a child? Can not you hear the path as you walk?"

Nunez laughed "I can see it," he said

"There is no such word as *see*," said the blind man, after a pause "Cease this folly, and follow the sound of my feet"

Nunez followed, a little annoyed

"My time will come," he said

"You'll learn," the blind man answered "There is much to learn in the world"

"Has no one told you, 'In the Country of the Blind the One eyed Man is King'?"

"What is blind?" asked the blind man carelessly over his shoulder

Four days passed, and the fifth found the King of the Blind still incognito as a clumsy and useless stranger among his subjects

It was, he found, much more difficult to proclaim himself than he had supposed, and in the meantime, while he meditated his *coup d'état* he did what he was told and learned the manners and customs of the Country of the Blind He found working and going about at night a particularly irksome thing and he decided that that should be the first thing he would change

They led a simple, laborious life these people, with all the elements of virtue and happiness as these things can be understood by men They toiled but not oppressively, they had food and clothing sufficient for their needs, they had days and seasons of rest they made much of music and singing and there was love among them, and little children

It was marvellous with what confidence and precision they went about their ordered world Everything, you see, had been made to fit their needs, each of the radiating paths of the valley area had a constant angle to the others, and was distinguished by a special notch upon its kerbing all obstacles and irregularities of path or meadow had long since been cleared away, all their methods and procedure arose naturally from their special needs Their senses had become marvellously acute, they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away—could hear the very beating of his heart Intonation had long replaced expression with them, and touches gesture, and their work with hoe and spade and fork was as free and confident as garden work can be Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can

and they went about the tending of the llamas, who lived among the rocks above and came to the wall for food and shelter with ease and confidence It was only when at last Nunez sought to assert himself that he found how easy and confident their movements could be

He rebelled only after he had tried persuasion

He tried at first on several occasions to tell them of sight "Look you here you people," he said "There are things you do not understand in me"

Once or twice one or two of them attended to him they sat with faces downcast and ears turned intelligently towards him, and he did his best to tell them what it was to see Among his hearers was a girl, with eyelids less red and sunken than the others, so that one could almost fancy she was hiding eyes, whom especially he hoped to persuade He spoke of the beauties of sight of watching the mountains, of the sky and the sunrise and they heard him with amused incredulity that presently became condemnatory They told him there were indeed no mountains at all, but that the end of the rocks where the llamas grazed was indeed the end of the world, thence sprang a cavernous roof of the universe from which the dew and the avalanches fell, and when he maintained stoutly the world had neither end nor roof such as they supposed, they said his thoughts were wicked So far as he could describe sky and clouds and stars to them it seemed to them a hideous void a terrible blankness in the place of the smooth roof to things in which they believed—it was an article of faith with them that the cavern roof was exquisitely smooth to the touch He saw that in some manner he shocked them and gave up that aspect of the matter altogether, and tried to show them the practical value of sight One morning he saw Pedro in the path called Seventeen and coming towards the central houses, but still too far off for hearing or scent, and he told them as much "In a little while,"

he prophesied, "Pedro will be here An old man remarked that Pedro had no business on path Seventeen, and then, as if in confirmation, that individual as he drew near turned and went transversely into Path Ten and so back with nimble paces towards the outer wall They mocked Nunez when Pedro did not arrive and afterwards, when he asked Pedro questions to clear his character, Pedro denied and outfaced him and was afterwards hostile to him

Then he induced them to let him go a long way up the sloping meadows towards the wall with one complacent individual, and to him he promised to describe all that happened among the houses He noted certain goings and comings, but the things that really seemed to signify to these people happened inside of or behind the windowless houses—the only things they took note of to test him by—and of these he could see or tell nothing, and it was after the failure of this attempt and the ridicule they could not repress that he resorted to force He thought of seizing a spade and suddenly smiting one or two of them to earth, and so in fair combat showing the advantage of eyes He went so far with that resolution as to seize his spade and then he discovered a new thing about himself and that was that it was impossible for him to hit a blind man in cold blood

He hesitated, and found them all aware that he snatched up the spade They stood alert with their heads on one side, and bent ears towards him for what he would do next

"Put that spade down," said one, and he felt a sort of helpless horror He came near obedience

Then he thrust one backwards against a house wall and fled past him and out of the village

He went athwart one of their meadows leaving a track of trampled grass behind his feet, and presently sat down by the side of one of their ways He felt something of the buoyancy that comes to all men in

the beginning of a fight, but more perplexity He began to realise that you cannot even fight happily with creatures who stand upon a different mental basis to yourself Far away he saw a number of men carrying spades and sticks come out of the street of houses, and advance in a spreading line along the several paths towards him They advanced slowly, speaking frequently to one another, and ever and again the whole cordon would halt and sniff the air and listen

The first time they did this Nunez laughed But afterwards he did not laugh

One struck his trail in the meadow grass, and came stooping and feeling his way along it

For five minutes he watched the slow extension of the cordon, and then his vague disposition to do something forthwith became frantic He stood up, went a pace or so towards the circumferential wall, turned, and went back a little way There they all stood in a crescent, still and listening

He also stood still, gripping his spade very tightly in both hands Should he charge them?

The pulse in his ears ran into the rhythm of "In the [illegible] King!"

[illegible] imbable wall [illegible] th plastering, but withal pierced with many little doors, and at the approaching line of seekers Behind these, others were now coming out of the street of houses

Should he charge them?

"Bogota!" called one "Bogota! where are you?"

He gripped his spade still tighter, and advanced down the meadows towards the place of habitations, and directly he moved they converged upon him "I'll hit them if they touch me," he swore, "by Heaven, I will I'll hit" He called aloud, "Look here, I'm going to do what I like in this valley Do you hear? I'm going to do what I like and go where I like!"

They were moving in upon him quickly, groping yet moving rapidly It was like playing blind man's buff, with everyone blindfolded except one 'Get hold of him!" cried one. He found himself in the arc of a loose curve of pursuers He felt suddenly he must be active and resolute

"You don't understand,' he cried in a voice that was meant to be great and resolute and which broke "You are blind, and I can see Leave me alone

"Bogota! Put down that spade and come off the grass!"

The last order, grotesque in its urban familiarity, produced a gust of anger

"I'll hurt you' he said, sobbing with emotion "By Heaven, I'll hurt you Leave me alone!"

He began to run, not knowing clearly where to run He ran from the nearest blind man, because it was a horror to hit him He stopped, and then made a dash to escape from their closing ranks He made for where a gap was wide, and the men on either side, with a quick perception of the approach of his paces, rushed in on one another He sprang forward, and then saw he must be caught, and *swish!* the spade had struck He felt the soft thud of hand and arm and the man was down with a yell of pain and he was through

Through! And then he was close to the street of houses again, and blind men, whirling spades and stakes, were running with a sort of reasoned swiftness hither and thither

He heard steps behind him just in time, and found a tall man rushing forward and swiping at the sound of him He lost his nerve, hurled his spade a yard wide at his antagonist and whirled about and fled fairly yelling as he dodged another

He was panic stricken He ran furiously to and fro dodging when there was no need to dodge, and in his anxiety to see on every side of him at once stumbling For a moment he was down and they heard his fall

Far away in the circumferential wall a little doorway looked like heaven, and he set off in a wild rush for it He did not even look round at his pursuers until it was gained, and he had stumbled across the bridge, clambered a little way among the rocks, to the surprise and dismay of a young llama, who went leaping out of sight, and lay down sobbing for breath

And so his *coup d etat* came to an end

He stayed outside the wall of the valley of the Blind for two nights and days without food or shelter, and meditated upon the unexpected During these meditations he repeated very frequently and always with a profounder note of derision the exploded proverb "In the Country of the Blind the One Eyed Man is King" He thought chiefly of ways of fighting and conquering these people, and it grew clear that for him no practicable way was possible He had no weapons, and now it would be hard to get one

The canker of civilisation had got to him even in Bogota, and he could not find it in himself to go down and assassinate a blind man Of course, if he did that, he might then dictate terms on the threat of assassinating them all But—sooner or later he must sleep!

He tried also to find food among the pine trees, to be comfortable under pine boughs while the frost fell at night, and—with less confidence—to catch a llama by artifice in order to try to kill it—perhaps by hammering it with a stone—and so finally, perhaps, to eat some of it But the llamas had a doubt of him and regarded him with distrustful brown eyes, and spat when he drew near Fear came on him the second day and fits of shivering Finally he crawled down to the wall of the Country of the Blind and tried to make terms He crawled along by the stream, shouting, until two blind men came out to the gate and talked to him

"I was mad," he said "But I was only newly made."

They said that was better

He told them he was wiser now, and repented of all he had done

Then he wept without intention for he was very weak and ill now, and they took that as a fav rable sign

They asked him if he still thought he could "see"

"No," he said "That was folly The word means nothing—less than nothing!"

They asked him what was overhead

"About ten times ten the height of a man there is a roof above the world—of rock—and very, very smooth" . He burst again into hysterical tears "Before you ask me any more, give me some food or I shall die"

He expected dire punishments but these blind people were capable of toleration They regarded his rebel lion as but one more proof of his general idiocy and inferiority, and after they had whipped him they appointed him to do the simplest and heaviest work they had for anyone to do and he, seeing no other way of living, did submissively what he was told

He was ill for some days and they nursed him kindly That refined his submission But they insisted on his lying in the dark, and that was a great misery And blind philosophers came and talked to him of the wicked levity of his mind and reproved him so im pressively for his doubts about the lid of rock that covered their cosmic casserole that he almost doubted whether indeed he was not the victim of hallucination in not seeing it overhead

So Nunez became a citizen of the Country of the Blind, and these people ceased to be a generalised people and became individualit es and familiar to him while the world beyond the mountains became more and more remote and unreal There was Yacob, his master a kindly man when not annoyed there was Pedro, Yacob's nephew and there was Medina sarotè

who was the youngest daughter of Yacob She was little esteemed in the world of the blind, because she had a clear cut face and lacked that satisfying, glossy smoothness that is the blind man's ideal of feminine beauty but Nunez thought her beautiful at first, and presently the most beautiful thing in the whole creation Her closed eyelids were not sunken and red after the common way of the valley, but lay as though they might open again at any moment, and she had long eyelashes, which were considered a grave disfigurement And her voice was strong, and did not satisfy the acute hearing of the valley swains So that she had no lover

There came a time when Nunez thought that, could he win her, he would be resigned to live in the valley for all the rest of his days

He watched her, he sought opportunities of doing her little services, and presently he found that she observed him Once at a rest day gathering they sat side by side in the dim starlight, and the music was sweet His hand came upon hers and he dared to clasp it Then very tenderly she returned his pressure And one day, as they were at their meal in the dark ness, he felt her hand very softly seeking him, and as it chanced the fire leaped then and he saw the tender ness of her face

He sought to speak to her

He went to her one day when she was sitting in the summer moonlight spinning The light made her a thing of silver and mystery He sat down at her feet and told her he loved her, and told her how beautiful she seemed to him He had a lover's voice, he spoke with a tender reverence that came near to awe, and she had never before been touched by adoration She made him no definite answer, but it was clear his words pleased her

After that he talked to her whenever he could take an opportunity The valley became the world for him

and the world beyond the mountains where men lived in [illegible] seemed no more than a fairy tale he would some day pour into her ears. Very tentatively and timidly he spoke to her of sight.

Sight seemed to her the most poetical of fancies, and she listened to his description of the stars and the mountains and her own sweet white-lit beauty as though it was a guilty indulgence. She did not believe, she could only half understand, but she was mysteriously delighted, and it seemed to him that she completely understood.

His love lost its awe and took courage. Presently he was for demanding her of Yacob and the elders in marriage, but she became fearful and delayed. And it was one of her elder sisters who first told Yacob that Medina-saroté and Nunez were in love.

There was from the first very great opposition to the marriage of Nunez and Medina-saroté, not so much because they valued her as because they held him as a being apart, an idiot, incompetent thing below the permissible level of a man. Her sisters opposed it bitterly [illegible]

[illegible]

Nunez. He struck back. Then for the first time he found an advantage in seeing, even by twilight, and after that fight was over no one was disposed to raise a hand against him. But they still found his marriage impossible.

Old Yacob had a tenderness for his last little daughter, and was grieved to have her weep upon his shoulder.

"You see, my dear, he's an idiot. He has delusions, he can't do anything right."

"I know," wept Medina-saroté. "But he's better than he was. He's getting better. And he's strong

dear father, and kind—stronger and kinder than any other man in the world And he loves me—and father, I love him"

Old Yacob was greatly distressed to find her inconsolable, and, besides—what made it more distressing—he liked Nunez for many things So he went and sat in the windowless council chamber with the other elders and watched the trend of the talk, and said, at the proper time, "He's better than he was Very likely, some day, we shall find him as sane as ourselves"

Then afterwards one of the elders, who thought deeply, had an idea He was the great doctor among these people, their medicine man, and he had a very philosophical and inventive mind, and the idea of curing Nunez of his peculiarities appealed to him One day when Yacob was present he returned to the topic of Nunez

"I have examined Bogota," he said, "and the case is clearer to me I think very probably he might be cured"

"That is what I have always hoped," said old Yacob

"His brain is affected," said the blind doctor

The elders murmured assent

"Now, *what* affects it?"

"Ah!" said old Yacob

"*This*," said the doctor, answering his own question "Those queer things that are called the eyes and which exist to make an agreeable soft depression in the face, are diseased in the case of Bogota, in such a way as to affect his brain They are greatly distended, he has eyelashes, and his eyelids move, and consequently his brain is in a state of constant irritation and distraction"

"Yes?" said old Yacob "Yes?"

"And I think I may say with reasonable certainty that, in order to cure him completely, all that we need do is a simple and easy surgical operation—namely, to remove these irritant bodies"

"And then he will be sane?"

"Then he will be perfectly sane, and a quite admirable citizen"

"Thank Heaven for science!" said old Yacob and went forth at once to tell Nunez of his happy hopes

But Nunez's manner of receiving the good news struck him as being cold and disappointing

"One might think," he said, "from the tone you take, that you did not care for my daughter"

It was Medina saroté who persuaded Nunez to face the blind surgeons

"You do not want me," he said, "to lose my gift of sight?"

She shook her head

"My world is sight"

Her head drooped lower

"There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things—the flowers, the lichens among the rocks, the lightness and softness on a piece of fur, the far sky with its drifting down of clouds the sunsets and the stars And there is *you* For you alone it is good to have sight, to see your sweet serene face, your kindly lips, your dear, beautiful hands folded together It is these eyes of mine you won, these eyes that hold me to you, that these idiots seek Instead, I must touch you, hear you, and never see you again I must come under that roof of rock and stone and darkness, that horrible roof under which your imagination stoops No, you would not have me do that?"

[illegible] He stopped,

an [illegible]

[illegible] She paused

[illegible]

"I wish sometimes—you would not talk like that"

"Like what?"

"I know it's pretty—it's your imagination I love it, but *now*——"

He felt cold "*Now?*" he said faintly

She sat quite still

'You mean—you think—I should be better, better perhaps——

He was realising things very swiftly He felt anger indeed, anger at the dull course of fate, but also sympathy for her lack of understanding—a sympathy near akin to pity

"*Dear*' he said, and he could see by her whiteness how intensely her spirit pressed against the things she could not say He put his arms about her, he kissed her ear, and they sat for a time in silence

"If I were to consent to this?" he said at last, in a voice that was very gentle

She flung her arms about him, weeping wildly "Oh, if you would,' she sobbed, "if only you would!"

For a week before the operation that was to raise him from his servitude and inferiority to the level of a blind citizen, Nunez knew nothing of sleep, and all through the warm sunlit hours while the others slumbered happily, he sat brooding or wandered aimlessly, trying to bring his mind to bear on his dilemma He had given his answer, he had given his consent, and still he was not sure And at last work time was over, the sun rose in splendour over the golden crests and his last day of vision began for him He had a few minutes with Medina saroté before she went apart to sleep

"To morrow," he said, "I shall see no more"

"Dear heart!" she answered, and pressed his hands with all her strength

"They will hurt you but little,' she said, "and you are going through this pain—you are going through it, dear lover, for *me* Dear, if a woman's heart and life can do it, I will repay you My dearest one my dearest with the tender voice, I will repay"

He was drenched in pity for himself and her

He held her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers, and looked on her sweet face for the last time

"Good bye!" he whispered at tha dear night, "good bye!"

And then in silence he turned away from her

She could hear his slow retreating footsteps and something in the rhythm of them threw her into a passion of weeping

He had fully meant to go to a lonely place where the meadows were beautiful with white narcissus, and there remain until the hour of his sacrifice should come, but as he went he lifted up his eyes and saw the morning, the morning like an angel in golden armour, marching down the steeps

It seemed to him that before this splendour he, and this blind world in the valley, and his love, and all, were no more than a pit of sin

He did not turn aside as he had meant to do, but went on, and passed through the wall of the circumference and out upon the rocks, and his eyes were always upon the sunlit ice and snow

He saw their infinite beauty, and his imagination soared over them to the things beyond he was now to resign for ever

He thought of that great free world he was parted from, the world that was his own, and he had a vision of those further slopes distance beyond distance, with Bogota, a place of multitudinous stirring beauty, a glory by day, a luminous mystery by night, a place of palaces and fountains and statues and white houses, lying beautifully in the middle distance He thought how for a day or so one might come down through passes, drawing ever nearer and nearer to its busy streets and ways He thought of the river journey, day by day, from great Bogota to the still vaster world beyond, through towns and villages, forest and desert places, the rushing river day by day, until its banks receded and the big steamers came splashing by, and one had reached the sea—the limitless sea, with its thousand islands, its thousands of islands and its ships seen dimly far away in their inces

sant journeyings round and about that greater world And there, unpent by mountains, one saw the sky—the sky not such a disc as one saw it here, but an arch of immeasurable blue, a deep of deeps in which the circling stars were floating

His eyes scrutinised the great curtain of the moun tains with a keener inquiry

For example, if one went so, up that gully and to that chimney there then one might come out high among those stunted pines that ran round in a sort of shelf and rose still higher and higher as it passed above the gorge And then? That talus might be managed Thence perhaps a climb might be found to take him up to the precipice that came below the snow, and if that chimney failed, then another farther to the east might serve his purpose better And then? Then one would be out upon the amber lit snow there, and half way up to the crest of those beautiful desolations

He glanced back at the village, then turned right round and regarded it steadfastly

He thought of Medina saroté, and she had become small and remote

He turned again towards the mountain wall, down which the day had come to him

Then very circumspectly he began to climb

When sunset came he was no longer climbing, but he was far and high He had been higher, but he was still very high His clothes were torn, his limbs were blood stained, he was bruised in many places, but he lay as if he were at his ease, and there was a smile on his face

From where he rested the valley seemed as if it were in a pit and nearly a mile below Already it was dim with haze and shadow, though the mountain summits around him were things of light and fire The mountain summits around him were things of light and fire.

and the little details of the rocks near at hand were drenched with subtle beauty—a vein of green mineral piercing the grey, the flash of crystal faces here and there, a minute, minutely beautiful orange lichen close beside his face. There were deep mysterious shadows in the gorge, blue deepening into purple, and purple into a luminous darkness, and overhead was the illimitable vastness of the sky. But he heeded these things no longer, but lay quite inactive there, smiling as if he were satisfied merely to have escaped from the valley of the Blind in which he had thought to be King.

The glow of the sunset passed, and the night came, and still he lay peacefully contented under the cold stars.



STORY THE FIRST

The Stolen Bacillus

"THIS again," said the Bacteriologist, slipping a glass slide under the micros ope, ' is a preparation of the celebrated Bacillus of cholera—the cholera germ'

The pale faced man peered down the microscope He was evidently not accustomed to that kind of thing, and held a limp white hand over his disengaged eve "I see very little,' he said

"Touch this screw, said the Bacteriologist "perhaps the microscope is out of focus for you Eyes vary so much Just the fraction of a turn this way or that"

"Ah! now I see," said the visitor "Not so very much to see after all Little streaks and shreds of pink And yet those little particles, those mere atomies, might multiply and devastate a city! Wonderful!'

He stood up, and releasing the glass slip from the microscope, held it in his hand towards the window "Scarcely visible," he said, scrutinising the preparation He hesitated "Are these—alive? Are they dangerous now?"

"Those have been stained and killed," said the

Bacteriologist "I wish for my own part, we could kill and stain every one of them in the universe"

"I suppose,' the pale man said with a slight smile, "that you scarcely care to have such things about you in the living—in the active state?"

"On the contrary we are obliged to," said the Bacteriologist "Here, for instance——" He walked across the room and took up one of several sealed tubes "Here is the living thing This is a cultivation of the actual living disease bacteria" He hesitated "Bottled cholera so to speak"

A slight gleam of satisfaction appeared momentarily in the face of the pale man "It's a deadly thing to have in your possession" he said, devouring the little tube with his eyes The Bacteriologist watched the morbid pleasure in his visitor's expression This man, who had visited him that afternoon with a note of introduction from an old friend interested him from the very contrast of their dispositions The lank black hair and deep grey eyes, the haggard expression and nervous manner, the fitful yet keen interest of his visitor were a novel change from the phlegmatic deliberations of the ordinary scientific worker with whom the Bacteriologist chiefly associated It was perhaps natural, with a hearer evidently so impressionable to the lethal nature of his topic, to take the most effective aspect of the matter

He held the tube in his hand thoughtfully "Yes here is the pestilence imprisoned Only break such a little tube as this into a supply of drinking water say to these minute particles of life that one must needs stain and examine with the highest powers of the microscope even to see, and that one can neither smell nor taste—say to them, 'Go forth, increase and multiply, and replenish the cisterns' and death—mysterious, untraceable death, death swift and terrible, death full of pain and indignity—would be released upon this city and go hither and thither seeking his victims Here

he would take the husband from the wife, here the child from its mother, here the statesman from his duty, and here the toiler from his trouble He would follow the water mains, creeping along streets, picking out and punishing a house here and a house there where they did not boil their drinking water, creeping into the wells of the mineral water makers getting washed into salad, and lying dormant in ices He would wait ready to be drunk in the horse troughs, and by unwary children in the public fountains He would soak into the soil, to reappear in springs and wells at a thousand unexpected places Once start him at the water supply, and before we could ring him in, and catch him again, he would have decimated the metropolis"

He stopped abruptly He had been told rhetoric was his weakness

"But he is quite safe here, you know—quite safe"

The pale faced man nodded His eyes shone He cleared his throat "These Anarchist—rascals," said he, "are fools, blind fools—to use bombs when this kind of thing is attainable I think——"

A gentle rap, a mere light touch of the finger nails was heard at the door The Bacteriologist opened it "Just a minute, dear" whispered his wife

When he re-entered the laboratory his visitor was looking at his watch "I had no idea I had wasted an hour of your time," he said "Twelve minutes to four I ought to have left here by half past three But your things were really too interesting No, positively I cannot stop a moment longer I have an engagement at four"

He passed out of the room reiterating his thanks and the Bacteriologist accompanied him to the door, and then returned thoughtfully along the passage to his laboratory He was musing on the ethnology of his visitor Certainly the man was not a Teutonic type nor a common Latin one "A morbid product, any how, I am afraid," said the Bacteriologist to himself

"How he gloated on those cultivations of disease germs! A disturbing thought struck him He turned to the bench by the vapour bath, and then very quickly to his writing table Then he felt hastily in his pockets, and then rushed to the door "I may have put it down on the hall table," he said

"Minnie!" he shouted hoarsely in the hall

"Yes, dear," came a remote voice

"Had I anything in my hand when I spoke to you dear, just now?"

Pause

"Nothing, dear because I remember——"

"Blue ruin!" cried the Bacteriologist, and incontinently ran to the front door and down the steps of his house to the street

Minnie, hearing the door slam violently, ran in alarm to the window Down the street a slender man was getting into a cab The Bacteriologist, hatless, and in his carpet slippers, was running and gesticulating wildly towards this group One slipper came off, but he did not wait for it "He has gone *mad!*" said Minnie, "it's that horrid science of his", and, opening the window, would have called after him The slender man, suddenly glancing round, seemed struck with the same idea of mental disorder He pointed hastily to the Bacteriologist, said something to the cab man, the apron of the cab slammed, the whip swished, the horse's feet clattered, and in a moment cab, and Bacteriologist hotly in pursuit, had receded up the vista of the roadway and disappeared round the corner

Minnie remained straining out of the window for a minute. Then she drew her head back into the room again She was dumbfounded "Of course he is eccentric," she meditated "But running about London —in the height of the season, too—in his socks!" A happy thought struck her She hastily put her bonnet on, seized his shoes, went into the hall, took down his hat and light overcoat from the pegs, emerged upon

the doors up, and hailed a cab that opportunely crawled by "Drive me up the road and round Havelock Crescent, and see if we can find a gentleman running about in a velveteen coat and no hat"

"Velveteen coat, ma'am and no 'at Very good, ma'am" And the cabman whipped up at once in the most matter-of fact way, as if he drove to this address every day in his life

Some few minutes later the little group of cabmen and loafers that collects round the cabmen's shelter at Haverstock Hill were startled by the passing of a cab with a ginger-coloured screw of a horse, driven furiously.

They were silent as it went by, and then as it receded —"That's 'Arry 'Icks Wot's *he* got?" said the stout gentleman known as Old Tootles

"He's a using his whip, he is, *to* rights," said the ostler boy

"Hullo!" said poor old Tommy Byles, "here's another bloomin' loonatic Blowed if there ain't"

- "It's old George," said old Tootles, "and he's drivin' a loonatic, *as* you say Ain't he a-clawin' out of the keb? Wonder if he's after 'Arry 'Icks?"

The group round the cabmen's shelter became animated Chorus "Go it, George!" "It's a race" "You'll ketch 'em!" "Whip up!"

"She's a goer, she is!" said the ostler boy

"Strike me giddy!" cried old Tootles "Here! *I'm* a goin' to begin in a minute Here's another comin' If all the kebs in Hampstead ain't gone mad this morning!"

"It's a fieldmale this time" said the ostler boy

"She's a followin' *him*," said old Tootles "Usually the other way about"

"What's she got in her 'and?"

"Looks like a 'igh 'at"

"What a bloomin' lark it is! Three to one on old George," said the ostler boy "Nexst!"

Minnie went by in a perfect roar of applause. She did not like it, but she felt that she was doing her duty, and whirled on down Haverstock Hill and Camden Town High Street with her eyes ever intent on the animated back view of old George, who was driving her vagrant husband so incomprehensively away from her.

The man in the foremost cab sat crouched in the corner, his arms tightly folded, and the little tube that contained such vast possibilities of destruction gripped in his hand. His mood was a singular mixture of fear and exultation. Chiefly he was afraid of being caught before he could accomplish his purpose, but behind this was a vaguer but larger fear of the awfulness of his crime. But his exultation far exceeded his fear. No Anarchist before him had ever approached this conception of his. Ravachol, Vaillant, all those distinguished persons whose fame he had envied dwindled into insignificance beside him. He had only to make sure of the water supply, and break the little tube into a reservoir. How brilliantly he had planned it, forged the letter of introduction and got into the laboratory, and how brilliantly he had seized his opportunity! The world should hear of him at last. All those people who had sneered at him, neglected him, preferred other people to him, found his company undesirable, should consider him at last. Death, death, death! They had always treated him as a man of no importance. All the world had been in a conspiracy to keep him under. He would teach them yet what it is to isolate a man. What was this familiar street? Great Saint Andrew's Street, of course! How fared the chase? He craned out of the cab. The Bacteriologist was scarcely fifty yards behind. That was bad. He would be caught and stopped yet. He felt in his pocket for money, and found half a sovereign. This he thrust up through the trap in the top of the cab into the man's face. "More," he shouted, "if only we get away."

The money was snatched out of his hand "Right you are," said the cabman and the trap slammed, and the lash lay along the glistening side of the horse The cab swayed, and the Anarchist half falling under the trap, put the hand containing the little glass tube upon the apron to preserve his balance He felt the brittle thing crack, and the broken half of it rang upon the floor of the cab He fell back into the seat with a curse, and stared dismally at the two or three drops of moisture on the apron

He shuddered

"Well! I suppose I shall be the first. *Phew!* Anyhow, I shall be a Martyr That's something But it is a filthy death, nevertheless I wonder if it hurts as much as they say"

Presently a thought occurred to him—he groped between his feet A little drop was still in the broken end of the tube, and he drank that to make sure It was better to make sure. At any rate, he would not fail

Then it dawned upon him that there was no further need to escape the Bacteriologist In Wellington Street he told the cabman to stop, and got out. He slipped on the step and his head felt queer It was rapid stuff this cholera poison He waved his cabman out of existence, so to speak, and stood on the pavement with his arms folded upon his breast awaiting the arrival of the Bacteriologist There was something tragic in his pose The sense of imminent death gave him a certain dignity He greeted his pursuer with a defiant laugh

"Vive l'Anarchie! You are too late, my friend I have drunk it The cholera is abroad!

The Bacteriologist from his cab beamed curiously at him through his spectacles "You have drunk it An Anarchist! I see now" He was about to say something more, and then checked himself A smile hung in the corner of his mouth He opened the

apron of his cab as if to descend at which the Anarchist waved him a dramatic farewell and strode off towards Waterloo Bridge carefully jostling his infected body against as many people as possible The Bacteriologist was so preoccupied with the vision of him that he scarcely manifested the slightest surprise at the appearance of Minnie upon the pavement with his hat and shoes and overcoat "Very good of you to bring my things" he said and remained lost in contemplation of the receding figure of the Anarchist

"You had better get in," he said, still staring Minnie felt absolutely convinced now that he was mad, and directed the cabman home on her own responsibility "Put on my shoes? Certainly, dear," said he, as the cab began to turn and hid the strutting black figure now small in the distance, from his eyes Then suddenly something grotesque struck him, and he laughed Then he remarked, "It is really very serious, though"

"You see, that man came to my house to see me, and he is an Anarchist No—don't faint, or I cannot possibly tell you the rest And I wanted to astonish him, not knowing he was an Anarchist, and took up a cultivation of that new species of Bacterium I was telling you of, that infest, and I think cause, the blue patches upon various monkeys and like a fool, I said it was Asiatic cholera And he ran away with it to poison the water of London, and he certainly might have made things look blue for this civilised city And now he has swallowed it Of course, I cannot say what will happen, but you know it turned that kitten blue, and the three puppies—in patches, and the sparrow—bright blue But the bother is I shall have all the trouble and expense of preparing some more

"Put on my coat on this hot day! Why? Because we might meet Mrs Jabber My dear, Mrs Jabber is not a draught But why should I wear a coat on a hot day because of Mrs ——? Oh! *very* well"

STORY THE SECOND

The Flowering of the Strange Orchid

THE buying of orchids always has in it a certain speculative flavour. You have before you the brown shrivelled lump of tissue, and for the rest you must trust your judgment, or the auctioneer, or your good luck, as your taste may incline. The plant may be moribund or dead, or it may be just a respectable purchase, fair value for your money, or perhaps—for the thing has happened again and again—there slowly unfolds before the delighted eyes of the happy purchaser, day after day, some new variety, some novel richness, a strange twist of the labellum, or some subtler colouration or unexpected mimicry. Pride, beauty, and profit blossom together on one delicate green spike, and, it may be, even immortality. For the new miracle of Nature may stand in need of a new specific name, and *what so convenient as that of its discoverer?* "Johnsmithia"! There have been worse names.

It was perhaps the hope of some such happy dis co ry that ade Winter Wedderburn such a frequent attendant at these sales—that hope, and also, maybe, the fact that he had noth ng else of the slightest interest to do in the world He was a shy, lonely, rather ineffectual man provided with just enough income to keep off the spur of necessity, and not enough nervous energy to make h m seek any exacting employment He might have collected stamps or coins, or translated Horace, or bound books or invented new species of diatoms But, as it happened, he grew orchids, and had one ambitious little hothouse

"I have a fancy he said over his coffee, "that something is going to happen to me to day" He spoke—as he moved and thought—slowly

"Oh, don t say *that!* said his housekeeper—who was also his remote cousin For "something happening" was a euphemism that meant only one thing to her

"You misunderstand me I mean nothing unpleasant though what I do mean I scarcely know

"To day,' he continued, after a pause, "Peters' are going to sell a batch of plants from the Andamans and the Indies I shall go up and see what they have It may be I shall buy something good, unawares That may be it"

He passed his cup for his second cupful of coffee

"Are those the things collected by that poor young fellow you told me of the other day? asked his cousin as she filled his cup

"Yes," he said, and became meditative over a piece of toast

"Nothing ever does happen to me," he remarked presently, beginning to think aloud "I wonder why? Things enough happen to other people There is Harvey Only the other week—on Monday he picked up sixpence, on Wednesday his chicks all had the staggers, on Friday his cousin came home from Aus

tralia, and on Saturday he broke his ankle What a whirl of excitement!—*compared to me*"

"I think I would rather be without so much excitement" said his housekeeper "It can't be good for you"

"I suppose it's troublesome S[illegible] I [illegible] you see, nothing ever happens to me When I was a little boy I never had accidents I never fell in love as I grew up Never married [illegible] I wonder how it feels to have something happen to you, something really remarkable.'

"That orchid-collector was only thirty six—twenty years younger than myself when he died And he had been married twice and divorced once, he had had malarial fever four times and once he broke his thigh He killed a Malay once, and once he was wounded by a *poisoned dart And in the end he was killed by* jungle leeches It must have all been very troublesome, but then it must have been very interesting you know—except, perhaps, the leeches

"I am sure it was not good for him," said the lady, with conviction

"Perhaps not" And then Wedderburn looked at his watch "Twenty three minutes past eight I am going up by the quarter to twelve train so that there is plenty of time I think I shall wear my alpaca jacket—it is quite warm enough—and my grey felt hat and brown shoes I suppose——"

[illegible] of the [illegible]ndow at the serene sky and [illegible] face [illegible] if you are going to London," she said in a [illegible] admitted of no denial "There's all between here and the station coming back"

When he returned he was in a state of mild excitement *He had made a purchase* It was rare that he could make up his mind quickly enough to buy, but this time he had done so

"There are Vandas" he said, "and a Dendrobe and some Palæonophis" He surveyed his purchases lovingly as he consumed his soup They were laid out on the spotless tablecloth before him, and he was telling his cousin all about them as he slowly meandered through his dinner It was his custom to live all his visits to London over again in the evening for her and his own entertainment

"I knew something would happen to day And I have bought all these Some of them—some of them—I feel sure, do you know, that some of them will be remarkable I don't know how it is, but I feel just as sure as if someone had told me that some of these will turn out remarkable

"That one"—he pointed to a shrivelled rhizome—"was not identified It may be a Palæonophis—or it may not It may be a new species, or even a new genus And it was the last that poor Batten ever collected"

"I don't like the look of it," said his housekeeper "It's such an ugly shape"

"To me it scarcely seems to have a shape"

"I don't like those things that stick out," said his housekeeper

"It shall be put away in a pot to morrow."

"It looks," said the housekeeper, "like a spider shamming dead"

Wedderburn smiled and surveyed the root with his head on one side "It is certainly not a pretty lump of stuff But you can never judge of these things from their dry appearance It may turn out to be a very beautiful orchid indeed How busy I shall be to morrow! I must see to night just exactly what to do with these things, and to morrow I shall set to work

"They found poor Batten lying dead, or dying, in a mangrove swamp—I forget which," he began again presently, "with one of these very orchids crushed up

under his body He had been unwell for some days with some kind of native fever and I suppose he fainted These mangrove swamps are very unwholesome Every drop of blood they say, was taken out of him by the jungle leeches It may be that very plant that cost him his life to obtain"

"I think none the better of it for that"

"Men must work though women may weep," said Wedderburn with profound gravity

"Fancy dying away from every comfort in a nasty swamp! Fancy being ill of fever with nothing to take but chlorodyne and quinine—if men were left to themselves they would live on chlorodyne and quinine—and no one round you but horrible natives! They say the Andaman islanders are most disgusting wretches—and, anyhow, they can scarcely make good nurses not having the necessary training And just for people in England to have orchids!"

"I don't suppose it was comfortable but some men seem to enjoy that kind of thing" said Wedderburn "Anyhow, the natives of his party were sufficiently civilised to take care of all his collection until his colleague, who was an ornithologist, came back again from the interior though they could not tell the species of the orchid and had let it wither And it makes these things more interesting"

"It makes them disgusting I should be afraid of [illegible] ...nk, [illegible] g! [illegible] I [illegible]

"I will take them off the table if you like, and put them in the window seat I can see them just as well there"

The next few days he was indeed singularly busy in his steamy little hothouse, fussing about with charcoal, lumps of teak, moss and all the other mysteries of the orchid cultivator He considered he was having a

wonderfully eventful time In the evening he would talk about these new orchids to his friends, and over and over again he reverted to his expectation of some thing strange

Several of the Vandas and the Dendrobium died under his care, but presently the strange orchid began to show signs of life He was delighted and took his housekeeper right away from jam making to see it at once, directly he made the discovery

"That is a bud," he said, "and presently there will be a lot of leaves there, and those little things coming out here are aërial rootlets"

"They look to me like little white fingers poking out of the brown," said his housekeeper "I don't like them"

"Why not?"

"I don't know They look like fingers trying to get at you I can't help my likes and dislikes"

"I don't know for certain, but I don't *think* there are any orchids I know that have aërial rootlets quite like that It may be my fancy, of course You see they are a little flattened at the ends"

"I don't like 'em," said his housekeeper, suddenly shivering and turning away "I know it's very silly of me—and I'm very sorry, particularly as you like the thing so much But I can't help thinking of that corpse"

"But it may not be that particular plant That was merely a guess of mine"

His housekeeper shrugged her shoulders "Anyhow I don't like it," she said

Wedderburn felt a little hurt at her dislike to the plant But that did not prevent his talking to her about orchids generally, and this orchid in particular, whenever he felt inclined

"There are such queer things about orchids," he said one day, "such possibilities of surprises You know, Darwin studied their fertilisation, and showed

that the whole structure of an ordinary orchid flower was contrived in order that moths might carry the pollen from plant to plant Well it seems that there are lots of orchids known the flower of which cannot possibly be used for fertilisation in that way Some of the Cypripediums, for instance there are no insects known that can possibly fertilise them and some of them have never been found with seed

"But how do they form new plants?"

"By runners and tubers and that kind of outgrowth That is easily explained The puzzle is what are the flowers for?

"Very likely," he added "*my* orchid may be something extraordinary in that way If so I shall study it I have often thought of making researches as Darwin did But hitherto I have not found the time, or something else has happened to prevent it The leaves are beginning to unfold now I do wish you would come and see them!"

But she said that the orchid house was so hot it gave her the headache She had seen the plant once again, and the aërial rootlets, which were now some of them more than a foot long, had unfortunately reminded her of tentacles reaching out after something and they got into her dreams, growing after her with incredible rapidity So that she had settled to her entire satisfaction that she would not see that plant again, and Wedderburn had to admire its leaves alone They were of the ordinary broad form and a deep glossy green, with splashes and dots of deep red towards the base He knew of no other leaves quite like them The plant was placed on a low bench near the thermometer, and close by was a simple arrangement by which a tap dripped on the hot water pipes and kept the air steamy And he spent his afternoons now with some regularity meditating on the approaching flowering of this strange plant

And at last the great thing happened Directly he

entered the little glass house he knew that the spike had burst out, although his great *Palæonophis Lowii* hid the corner where his new darling stood. There was a new odour in the air, a rich, intensely sweet scent, that overpowered every other in that crowded, steaming little greenhouse.

Directly he noticed this he hurried down to the strange orchid. And, behold! the trailing green spikes bore now three great splashes of blossom, from which this overpowering sweetness proceeded. He stopped before them in an ecstasy of admiration.

The flowers were white, with streaks of golden orange upon the petals, the heavy labellum was coiled into an intricate projection, and a wonderful bluish purple mingled there with the gold. He could see at once that the genus was altogether a new one. And the insufferable scent! How hot the place was! The blossoms swam before his eyes.

He would see if the temperature was right. He made a step towards the thermometer. Suddenly everything appeared unsteady. The bricks on the floor were dancing up and down. Then the white blossoms, the green leaves behind them, the whole greenhouse, seemed to sweep sideways, and then in a curve upward.

* * * * *

At half past four his cousin made the tea, according to their invariable custom. But Wedderburn did not come in for his tea.

"He is worshipping that horrid orchid," she told herself, and waited ten minutes. "His watch must have stopped. I will go and call him."

She went straight to the hothouse, and, opening the door, called his name. There was no reply. She noticed that the air was very close, and loaded with an intense perfume. Then she saw something lying on the bricks between the hot water pipes.

For a minute, perhaps, she stood motionless.

He was lying, face upward, at the foot of the strange

orchid The tentacle like aerial rootlets no longer swayed freely in the air, but were crowded together a tangle of grey ropes, and stretched tight with their ends closely applied to his chin and neck and hands

She did not understand Then she saw from under one of the exultant tentacles upon his cheek there trickled a little thread of blood

With an inarticulate cry she ran towards him and tried to pull him away from the leech like suckers She snapped two of these tentacles, and their sap dripped red

Then the overpowering scent of the blossom began to make her head reel How they clung to him! She tore at the tough ropes and he and the white inflorescence swam about her She felt she was fainting knew she must not She left him and hastily opened the nearest door, and after she had panted for a moment in the fresh air she had a brilliant inspiration She caught up a flower pot and smashed in the windows at the end of the greenhouse Then she re entered She tugged now with renewed strength at Wedderburn's motionless body, and brought the strange orchid crashing to the floor It still clung with the grimmest tenacity to its victim In a frenzy, she lugged it and him into the open air

Then she thought of tearing through the sucker rootlets one by one and in another minute she had released him and was dragging him away from the horror

He was white and bleeding from a dozen circular patches

The odd job man was coming up the garden amazed at the smashing of glass and saw her emerge, hauling the inanimate body with red stained hands For a moment he thought impossible things

'Bring some water!' she cried and her voice dispelled his fancies When with unnatural alacrity he returned with the water, he found her weeping with

excitement, and with Wedderburn's head upon her knee wiping the blood from his face

'What's the matter?' said Wedderburn, opening his eyes feebly and closing them again at once

"Go and tell Annie to come out here to me, and then go for Doctor Haddon at once," she said to the odd job man so soon as he brought the water, and added seeing he hesitated, "I will tell you all about it when you come back"

Presently Wedderburn opened his eyes again, and, seeing that he was troubled by the puzzle of his position, she explained to him, "You fainted in the hot house"

"And the orchid?"

"I will see to that" she said

Wedderburn had lost a good deal of blood, but beyond that he had suffered no very great injury They gave him brandy mixed with some pink extract of meat, and carried him upstairs to bed His housekeeper told her incredible story in fragments to Dr Haddon "Come to the orchid house and see," she said

The cold outer air was blowing in through the open door, and the sickly perfume was almost dispelled Most of the torn aërial rootlets lay already withered amidst a number of dark stains upon the bricks The stem of the inflorescence was broken by the fall of the plant, and the flowers were growing limp and brown at the edges of the petals The doctor stooped towards it, then saw that one of the aërial rootlets still stirred feebly, and hesitated

The next morning the strange orchid still lay there, black now and putrescent The door banged intermittently in the morning breeze and all the array of Wedderburn's orchids was shrivelled and prostrate But Wedderburn himself was bright and garrulous upstairs in the glory of his strange adventure



STORY THE THIRD

In the Avu Observatory

THE observatory at Avu, in Borneo, stands on the spur of the mountain To the north rises the old crater, black at night against the unfathomable blue of the sky From the little circular building, with its mushroom dome, the slopes plunge steeply downward into the black mysteries of the tropical forest beneath The little house in which the observer and his assistant live is about fifty yards from the observatory, and beyond this are the huts of their native attendants

Thaddy, the chief observer, was down with a slight fever His assistant, Woodhouse, paused for a moment in silent contemplation of the tropical night before commencing his solitary vigil The night was very still Now and then voices and laughter came from the native huts, or the cry of some strange animal was heard from the midst of the mystery of the forest Nocturnal insects appeared in ghostly fashion out of the darkness and fluttered round his light He thought, perhaps, of all the possibilities of discovery that still lay in the black tangle beneath him, for to the naturalist the virgin forests of Borneo are still a won

derland full of strange questions and half suspected discoveries Woodhouse carried a small lantern in his hand and its yellow glow contrasted vividly with the infinite series of tints between lavender blue and black in which the landscape was painted His hands and face were smeared with ointment against the attacks of the mosquitoes

Even in these days of celestial photography, work done in a purely temporary erection, and with only the most primitive appliances in addition to the telescope still involves a very large amount of cramped and motionless watching He sighed as he thought of the physical fatigues before him, stretched himself, and entered the observatory

The reader is probably familiar with the structure of an ordinary astronomical observatory The building is usually cylindrical in shape with a very light hemispherical roof capable of being turned round from the interior The telescope is supported upon a stone pillar in the centre, and a clockwork arrangement compensates for the earth s rotation, and allows a star once found to be continuously observed Besides this, there is a compact tracery of wheels and screws about its point of support, by which the astronomer adjusts it There is, of course, a slit in the movable roof which follows the eye of the telescope in its survey of the heavens The observer sits or lies on a sloping wooden arrangement, which he can wheel to any part of the observatory as the position of the telescope may require Within it is advisable to have things as dark as possible, in order to enhance the brilliance of the stars observed

The lantern flared as Woodhouse entered his circular den, and the general darkness fled into black shadows behind the big machine, from which it presently seemed to creep back over the whole place again as the light waned The slit was a profound transparent blue, in which six stars shone with tropical brilliance, and their light lay, a pallid gleam, along the black tube of the

instrument Woodhouse shifted the roof and then proceeding to the telescope, turned first one wheel and then another, the great cylinder slowly swinging into a new position Then he glanced through the finder, the little companion telescope moved the roof a little more, made some further adjustments, and set the clockwork in motion He took off his jacket, for the night was very hot, and pushed into position the uncomfortable seat to which he was condemned for the next four hours Then with a sigh he resigned himself to his watch upon the mysteries of space

There was no sound now in the observatory, and the lantern waned steadily Outside there was the occasional cry of some animal in alarm or pain, or calling to its mate, and the intermittent sounds of the Malay and Dyak servants Presently one of the men began a queer chanting song, in which the others joined at intervals After this it would seem that they turned in for the night, for no further sound came from their direction, and the whispering stillness became more and more profound

The clockwork ticked steadily The shrill hum of a mosquito explored the place and grew shriller in indignation at Woodhouse's ointment Then the lantern went out and all the observatory was black

Woodhouse shifted his position presently, when the slow movement of the telescope had carried it beyond the limits of his comfort

He was watching a little group of stars in the Milky Way, in one of which his chief had seen or fancied a remarkable colour variability It was not a part of the regular work for which the establishment existed, and for that reason perhaps Woodhouse was deeply interested He must have forgotten things terrestrial All

...great blue circle

, so it seemed,

...d all luminous

he watched he

seemed to himself to become incorporeal, as if he too were floating in the ether of space Infinitely remote was the faint red spot he was observing

Suddenly the stars were blotted out A flash of blackness passed and they were visible again

"Queer, said Woodhouse "Must have been a bird'

The thing happened again, and immediately after he great tube shivered as though it had been struck Then the dome of the observatory resounded with a series of thundering blows The stars seemed to sweep aside as the telescope—which had been unclamped—swung round and away from the slit in the roof

"Great Scott!" cried Woodhouse "What's this?"

Some huge vague black shape, with a flapping some thing like a wing, seemed to be struggling in the aper ture of the roof In another moment the slit was clear again, and the luminous haze of the Milky Way shone warm and bright

The interior of the roof was perfectly black, and only a scraping sound marked the whereabouts of the unknown creature

Woodhouse had scrambled from the seat to his feet He was trembling violently and in a perspiration with the suddenness of the occurrence Was the thing whatever it was inside or out? It was big whatever else it might be Something shot across the skylight and the telescope swayed He started violently and put his arm up It was in the observatory, then, with him It was clinging to the roof, apparently What •he devil was it? Could it see him?

He stood for perhaps a minute in a state of stupe faction The beast, whatever it was clawed at the interior of the dome, and then something flapped almost into his face, and he saw the momentary gleam of starlight on a skin like oiled leather His water bottle was knocked off his little table with a smash

The sense of some strange bird-creature hovering a

few yards from his face in the darkness was indescribably unpleasant to Woodhouse. As his thought returned he concluded that it must be some night bird or large bat. At any risk he would see what it was, and pulling a match from his pocket he tried to strike it on the telescope seat. There was a smoking streak of phosphorescent light, the match flared for a moment, and he saw a vast wing sweeping towards him, a gleam of grey-brown fur, and then he was struck in the face and the match knocked out of his hand. The blow was aimed at his temple, and a claw tore sideways down to his cheek. He reeled and fell, and he heard the extinguished lantern smash. Another blow followed as he fell. He was partly stunned, he felt his own warm blood stream out upon his face. Instinctively he felt his eyes had been struck at, and, turning over on his face to protect them, tried to crawl under the protection of the telescope.

He was struck again upon the back, and he heard his jacket rip, and then the thing hit the roof of the observatory. He edged as far as he could between the wooden seat and the eyepiece of the instrument, and turned his body round so that it was chiefly his feet that were exposed. With these he could at least kick. He was still in a mystified state. The strange beast banged about in the darkness, and presently clung to the telescope, making it sway and the gear rattle. Once it flapped near him, and he kicked out madly and felt a soft body with his feet. He was horribly scared now. It must be a big thing to swing the telescope like that. He saw for a moment the outline of a head black against the starlight, with sharply pointed upstanding ears and a crest between them. It seemed to him to be as big as a mastiff's. Then he began to bawl out as loudly as he could for help.

At that the thing came down upon him again. As it did so his hand touched something beside him on the floor. He kicked out, and the next moment his ankle

was gripped and held by a row of keen teeth He yelled again and tried to free his leg by kicking with the other Then he realised he had the broken water bottle at his hand, and, snatching it he struggled into a sitting posture and feeling in the darkness towards his foot, gripped a velvety ear, like the ear of a big cat He had seized the water bottle by its neck and brought it down with a shivering crash upon the head of the strange beast He repeated the blow, and then stabbed and jobbed with the jagged end of it, in the darkness, where he judged the face might be

The small teeth relaxed their hold, and at once Woodhouse pulled his leg free and kicked hard He felt the sickening feel of fur and bone giving under his boot There was a tearing bite at his arm, and he struck over it at the face, as he judged, and hit damp fur

There was a pause, then he heard the sound of claws and the dragging of a heavy body away from him over the observatory floor Then there was silence, broken only by his own sobbing breathing, and a sound like licking Everything was black except the parallelogram of the blue skylight with the luminous dust of stars, against which the end of the telescope now appeared in silhouette He waited, as it seemed, an interminable time

Was the thing coming on again? He felt in his [illegible] see where the door was situated In his struggle he had quite lost his bearings The strange beast, disturbed by the splutter of the match, began to move again "Time!" called Woodhouse, with a sudden gleam of mirth, but the thing was not coming at him again He must have hurt it, he thought, with the broken bottle He felt a dull pain in his ankle

Probably he was bleeding there He wondered if it would support him if he tried to stand up The night outside was very still There was no sound of anyone moving The sleepy fools had not heard those wings battering upon the dome, nor his shouts It was no good wasting strength in shouting The monster flapped its wings and startled him into a defensive attitude He hit his elbow against the seat, and it fell over with a crash He cursed this, and then he cursed the darkness

Suddenly the oblong patch of starlight seemed to sway to and fro Was he going to faint? It would never do to faint He clenched his fists and set his teeth to hold himself together Where had the door got to? It occurred to him he could get his bearings by the stars visible through the skylight The patch of stars he saw was in Sagittarius and south eastward, the door was north—or was it north by west? He tried to think If he could get the door open he might retreat It might be the thing was wounded The suspense was beastly "Look here!" he said, "if you don't come on I shall come at you"

Then the thing began clambering up the side of the observatory, and he saw its black outline gradually blot out the skylight Was it in retreat? He forgot about the door, and watched as the dome shifted and creaked Somehow he did not feel very frightened or excited now He felt a curious sinking sensation inside him The sharply-defined patch of light, with the black form moving across it, seemed to be growing smaller and smaller That was curious He began to feel very thirsty, and yet he did not feel inclined to get anything
[illegible] a funnel



STORY THE FOURTH

The Triumphs of a Taxidermist

HERE are some of the secrets of taxidermy. They were told me by the taxidermist in a mood of elation. He told me them in the time between the first glass of whisky and the fourth, when a man is no longer cautious and yet not drunk. We sat in his den together; his library it was, his sitting and his eating room—separated by a bead curtain, so far as the sense of sight went, from the noisome den where he plied his trade.

He sat on a deck chair, and when he was not tapping refractory bits of coal with them, he kept his feet—on which he wore, after the manner of sandals, the holy relics of a pair of carpet slippers—out of the way upon the mantelpiece, among the glass eyes. And his trousers, by the by—though they have nothing to do with his triumphs—were a most horrible yellow plaid, such as they made when our fathers wore side whiskers and there were crinolines in the land. Further, his hair was black, his face rosy, and his eye a fiery brown; and his [illegible] chiefly of grease upon a basis of

freely That is about as much as I know about the beast Our conversation was intimate, so to speak, and yet not confidential"

"The Dyak chaps talk about a Big Colugo, a Klang utang—whatever that may be It does not often attack man, but I suppose you made it nervous They say there is a Big Colugo and a Little Colugo, and a something else that sounds like gobble They all fly about at night For my own part I know there are flying foxes and flying lemurs about here, but they are none of them very big beasts'

"There are more things in heaven and earth," said Woodhouse—and Thaddy groaned at the quotation—"and more particularly in the forests of Borneo, than are dreamt of in our philosophies On the whole, if the Borneo fauna is going to disgorge any more of its novelties upon me, I should prefer that it did so when I was not occupied in the observatory at night and alone."

STORY THE FOURTH

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velveteen And his pipe had a bowl of china showing the Graces, and his spectacles were always askew, the left eye glaring nakedly at you, small and penetrating; the right, seen through a glass darkly, magnified and mild Thus his discourse ran "There never was a man who could stuff like me, Bellows, never I have stuffed elephants and I have stuffed moths, and the things have looked all the livelier and better for it And I have stuffed human beings—chiefly amateur ornithologists But I stuffed a nigger once

"No, there is no law against it I made him with all his fingers out and used him as a hat rack, but that fool Homersby got up a quarrel with him late one night and spoilt him That was before your time It is hard to get skins, or I would have another

"Unpleasant? I don't see it Seems to me taxidermy is a promising third course to burial or cremation You could keep all your dear ones by you Bric-à-brac of that sort stuck about the house would be as good as most company, and much less expensive You might have them fitted up with clockwork to do things

"Of course they would have to be varnished, but they need not shine more than lots of people do naturally. Old Manningtree's bald head Any how, you could talk to them without interruption Even aunts There is a great future before taxidermy, depend upon it There is fossils again "

He suddenly became silent

"No, I don't think I ought to tell you that" He sucked at his pipe thoughtfully "Thanks, yes Not too much water

[illegible]

the Holy Coat of Treves We make 'em of grebes

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"Of course, what I tell you now will go no further You know I have made some dodos and a great auk? No! Evidently you are an amateur at taxidermy My dear fellow, half the great auks in the world are about as genuine as the handkerchief of Saint Veronica, as the Holy Coat of Treves We make 'em of grebes'

feathers and the like And the great auk's eggs too!'

"Good heavens!"

"Yes, we make them out of fine porcelain I tell you it is worth while They fetch—one fetched £300 only the other day That one was really genuine, I believe but of course one is never certain It is very fine work, and afterwards you have to get them dusty, for no one who owns one of these precious eggs has ever the temerity to clean the thing That's the beauty of the business Even if they suspect an egg they do not like to examine it too closely It's such brittle capital at the best

"You did not know that taxidermy rose to heights like that My boy, it has risen higher I have rivalled the hands of Nature herself One of the *genuine* great auks"—his voice fell to a whisper—"one of the *genuine* great auks *was made by me*"

"No You must study ornithology, and find out which it is yourself And what is more, I have been approached by a syndicate of dealers to stock one of the unexplored skerries to the north of Iceland with specimens I may—some day But I have another little thing in hand just now Ever heard of the dinornis?

"It is one of those big birds recently extinct in New Zealand 'Moa' is its common name, so called because extinct there is no moa now See? Well, they have got bones of it, and from some of the marshes even feathers and dried bits of skin Now, I am going to—well, there is no need to make any bones about it—going to *forge* a complete stuffed moa I know a chap out there who will pretend to make the find in a kind of antiseptic swamp, and say he stuffed it at once, as it threatened to fall to pieces The feathers are peculiar, but I have got a simply lovely way of dodging up singed bits of ostrich plume Yes, that is the new smell you noticed They can only discover the fraud

with a microscope, and they will hardly care to pull a nice specimen to bits for that

"In this way, you see, I give my little push in the advancement of science

"But all this is merely imitating Nat re I have done more than that in my time I have—beaten her"

He took his feet down from the mantel board and leant over confidentially towards me "I have *created* birds," he said in a low voice "*New* b r ls Im provements I ike no birds that was ever seen before

He resumed his attitude during an impressive silence

"Enrich the universe, *rath er* Some of the birds I made were new kinds of humming birds and very beautiful little things, but some of them were simply rum The rummest, I think was the *Anomalopteryx Jejuna. Jejunus a um*—empty—so called because there was really nothing in it a thoroughly empty bird—except for stuffing Old Javvers has the thing now, and I *suppose he is almost as proud of it as I am* It is a masterpiece Bellows It has a l the silly clumsiness of your pelican, all the solemn want of dignity of yo r parrot, all the gaunt ungainliness of a flamingo, with all the extravagant chromatic conflict of a mandarin duck *Such* a bird I made it out of the skeletons of a stork and a toucan and a job lot of feathers Taxidermy of that kind is just pure joy Bellows, to a real artist in the art

"How did I come to make it? Simple enough, as all *great inventions are One of those young genii* who write us Science Notes in the papers got hold of a German pamphlet about the birds of New Zealand and translated some of it by means of a dictionary and his mother wit—he must have been one of a very large family with a small mother—and he got mixed between the living apteryx and the extinct anomal opteryx, talked about a bird five feet high, living in the jungles of the North Island, rare, shy, specimens

difficult to obtain, and so on Javvers, who even for a collector, is a miraculously ignorant man, read these paragraphs, and swore he would have the thing at any price Raided the dealers with enquiries It shows what a man can do by persistence—will power Here was a bird collector swearing he would have a specimen of a bird that did not exist that never had existed, and which for very shame of its own profane ungainliness, probably would not exist now if it could help itself And he got it *He got it*"

"Have some more whisky, Bellows?" said the taxidermist, rousing himself from a transient contemplation of the mysteries of will power and the collecting turn of mind And, replenished, he proceeded to tell me of how he concocted a most attractive mermaid, and how an itinerant preacher, who could not get an audience because of it, smashed it because it was idolatry, or worse, at Burslem Wakes But as the conversation of all the parties to this transaction, creator, would be preserver, and destroyer, was uniformly unfit for publication, this cheerful incident must still remain unprinted

The reader unacquainted with the dark ways of the collector may perhaps be inclined to doubt my taxidermist but so far as great auks' eggs, and the bogus stuffed birds are concerned, I find that he has the confirmation of distinguished ornithological writers And the note about the New Zealand bird certainly appeared in a morning paper of unblemished reputation, for the Taxidermist keeps a copy and has shown it to me



STORY THE FIFTH

A Deal in Ostriches

"TALKING of the prices of birds, I've seen an *ostrich that cost three hundred pounds,*" *said the* Taxidermist, recalling his youth of travel "Three hundred pounds!"

He looked at me over his spectacles "I've seen *another that was refused at four*"

"No," he said, "it wasn't any fancy points They was just plain ostri [illegible]
to dietary And [illegible]
of the demand [illegible]
ostriches would have ruled cheap on an East India man But the point was, one of 'em had swallowed a diamond

"*The chap it got it off was Sir Mohini Padishah*, a tremendous swell, a Piccadilly swell you might say up to the neck of him, and then an ugly black head and a whopping turban, with this diamond in it The *blessed bird pecked suddenly and had it, and when the* chap made a fuss it realised it had done wrong, I suppose and went and mixed itself with the others to preserve its *incog* It all happened in a minute I *was among the first to arrive, and there was this heathen*

going over his gods, and two sailors and the man who had charge of the birds laughing fit to split It was a rummy way of losing a jewel, come to think of it. The man in charge hadn't been about just at the moment, so that he didn't know which bird it was Clean lost, you see I didn't feel half sorry, to tell you the truth The beggar had been swaggering over his blessed diamond ever since he came aboard

"A thing like that goes from stem to stern of a ship in no time Everyone was talking about it Padishah went below to hide his feelings At dinner—he pigged at a table by himself, him and two other Hindoos—the captain kind of jeered at him about it, and he got very excited He turned round and talked into my ear He would not buy the birds, he would have his diamond He demanded his rights as a British subject His diamond must be found He was firm upon that He would appeal to the House of Lords The man in charge of the birds was one of those wooden headed chaps you can't get a new idea into anyhow He refused any proposal to interfere with the birds by way of medicine His instructions were to feed them so and so and treat them so and so, and it was as much as his place was worth not to feed them so and so and treat them so and so Padishah had wanted a stomach pump — though you can't do that to a bird, you know This Padishah was full of bad law, like most of these blessed Bengalis, and talked of having a lien on the birds, and so forth But an old boy, who said his son was a London barrister, argued that what a bird swallowed became *ipso facto* part of the bird, and that Padishah's only remedy lay in an action for damages, and even then it might be possible to show contributory negligence He hadn't any right of way about an ostrich that didn't belong to him That upset Padishah extremely, the more so as most of us expressed an opinion that that was the reasonable view There wasn't any lawyer aboard to settle the matter so we

all talked pretty free At last, after Aden, it appears that he came round to the general opinion, and went privately to the man in charge and made an offer for all five ostriches

"The next morning there was a fine shindy at breakfast The man hadn't any authority to deal with the birds, and nothing on earth would induce him to sell, but it seems he told Padishah that a Eurasian named Potter had already made him an offer and on that Padishah denounced Potter before us all But I think the most of us thought it rather smart of Potter, and I know that when Potter said that he'd wired at Aden to London to buy the birds, and would have an answer at Suez, I cursed pretty richly at a lost opportunity

"At Suez, Padishah gave way to tears—actual wet tears—when Potter became the owner of the birds, and offered him two hundred and fifty right off for the five, being more than two hundred per cent on what Potter had given Potter said he'd be hanged if he parted with a feather of them—that he meant to kill them off one by one and find the diamond but afterwards, thinking it over, he relented a little He was a gambling hound, was this Potter, a little queer at cards and this kind of prize packet business must have suited him down to the ground Anyhow, he offered, for a lark, to sell the birds separately to separate people by auction at a starting price of £80 for a bird But one of them, he said he meant to keep for luck

"You must understand this diamond was a valuable one—a little Jew chap, a diamond merchant, who was with us, had put it at three or four thousand when Padishah had shown it to him—and this idea of an ostrich gamble caught on Now it happened that I'd been having a few talks on general subjects with the man who looked after these ostriches, and quite incidentally he'd said one of the birds was ailing, and he fancied it had indigestion It had one feather in its tail almost all white, by which I knew it, and so when,

next day, the auction started with it, I capped Padishah's eighty five by ninety I fancy I was a bit too sure and eager with my bid and some of the others spotted the fact that I was in the know And Padishah went for that particular bird like an irresponsible lunatic At last the Jew diamond merchant got it for £175, and Padishah said £180 just after the hammer came down—so Potter declared At any rate the Jew merchant secured it, and there and then he got a gun and shot it Potter made a Hades of a fuss because he said it would injure the sale of the other three, and Padishah, of course, behaved like an idiot, but all of us were very much excited I can tell you I was precious glad when that dissection was over, and no diamond had turned up—precious glad I'd gone to one forty on that particular bird myself

"The little Jew was like most Jews—he didn't make any great fuss over bad luck, but Potter declined to go on with the auction until it was understood that the goods could not be delivered until the sale was over The little Jew wanted to argue that the case was exceptional, and as the discussion ran pretty even the thing was postponed until the next morning We had a lively dinner table that evening I can tell you, but in the end Potter got his way, since it would stand to reason he would be safer if he stuck to all the birds, and that we owed him some consideration for his sportsmanlike behaviour And the old gentleman whose son was a lawyer said he'd been thinking the thing over and that it was very doubtful if, when a bird had been opened and the diamond recovered, it ought not to be handed back to the proper owner I remember I suggested it came under the laws of treasure trove—which was really the truth of the matter There was a hot argument, and we settled it was certainly foolish to kill the bird on board the ship Then the old gentleman, going at large through his legal talk, tried to make out the sale was a lottery and illegal,

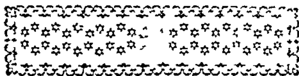
and appealed to the captain, but Potter said he sold the birds *as* ostriches. He didn't want to sell any diamonds, he said, and didn't offer that as an inducement. The three birds he put up, to the best of his knowledge and belief, did *not* contain a diamond. It was in the one he kept—so he hoped.

"Prices ruled high next day all the same. The fact that now there were four chances instead of five of course caused a rise. The blessed birds averaged £227, and, oddly enough, this Padishah didn't secure one of 'em—not one. He made too much shindy, and when he ought to have been bidding he was talking about liens, and, besides, Potter was a bit down on him. One fell to a quiet little officer chap, another to the little Jew, and the third was syndicated by the engineers. And then Potter seemed suddenly sorry for having sold them, and said he'd flung away a clear thousand pounds, and that very likely he'd draw a blank and that he always had been a fool, but when I went and had a bit of a talk to him, with the idea of getting him to hedge on his last chance, I found he'd already sold the bird he'd reserved to a political chap that was on board, a chap who'd been studying Indian morals and social questions in his vacation. That last was the three hundred pounds bird. Well, they landed three of the blessed creatures at Brindisi—though the old gentleman said it was a breach of the Customs regulations—and Potter and Padishah landed too. The Hindoo seemed half mad as he saw his blessed diamond going this way and that, so to speak. He kept on saying he'd get an injunction—he had injunction on the brain—and giving his name and address to the chaps who'd bought the birds, so that they'd know where to send the diamond. None of them wanted his name and address, and none of them would give their own. It was a fine row I can tell you—on the platform. They all went off by different trains. I came on to Southampton, and there I saw the last of

the birds, as I came ashore, it was the one the engineers bought, and it was standing up near the bridge, in a kind of crate, and looking as leggy and silly a setting for a valuable diamond as ever you saw—if it *was* a setting for a valuable diamond

"*How did it end?* Oh! like that Well—perhaps Yes, there's one more thing that may throw light on it A week or so after landing I was down Regent Street doing a bit of shopping, and who should I see arm in arm and having a purple time of it but Padishah and Potter If you come to think of it——

"Yes *I've* thought that Only, you see, there's no doubt the diamond was real And Padishah was an eminent Hindoo I've seen his name in the papers—often But whether the bird swallowed the diamond certainly is another matter, as you say."



STORY THE SIXTH

Through a Window

AFTER his legs were set, they carried Bailey into the study and put him on a couch before the open window There he lay, a live—even a feverish man down to the loins, and below that a double barrelled mummy swathed in white wrappings He tried to read, even tried to write a little, but most of the time he looked out of the window

He had thought the window cheerful to begin with, but now he thanked God for it many times a day Within, the room was dim and grey and in the reflected light the wear of the furniture showed plainly His medicine and drink stood on the little table, with such litter as the bare branches of a bunch of grapes or the ashes of a cigar upon a green plate or a day old evening paper The view outside was flooded with light, and across the corner of it came the head of the acacia, and at the foot the top of the balcony railing of hammered iron In the foreground was the weltering silver of the river, never quiet and yet never tiresome Beyond was the reedy bank, a broad stretch of meadow land and then a dark line of trees ending in a group of poplars at the distant bend of the river, and, upstanding behind them, a square church tower

Up and down the river all day long things were

passing Now a string of barges drifting down to London, piled with lime or barrels of beer, then a steam launch, disengaging heavy masses of black smoke, and disturbing the whole width of the river with long rolling waves then an impetuous electric launch, and then a boatload of pleasure seekers a solitary sculler, or a four from some rowing club Perhaps the river was quietest of a morning or late at night One moonlight night some people drifted down singing, and with a zither playing—it sounded very pleasantly across the water

In a few days Bailey began to recognise some of the craft, in a week he knew the intimate history of half a dozen The launch *Luzon* from Fitzgibbon's, two miles up, would go fretting by, sometimes three or four times a day, conspicuous with its colouring of Indian red and yellow, and its two Oriental attendants, and one day to Bailey's vast amusement, the house boat *Purple Emperor* came to a stop outside, and breakfasted in the most shameless domesticity Then one afternoon, the captain of a slow moving barge began a quarrel with his wife as they came into sight from the left, and had carried it to personal violence before he vanished behind the window frame to the right Bailey regarded all this as an entertainment got up to while away his illness, and applauded all the more moving incidents Mrs Green, coming in at rare intervals with his meals, would catch him clapping his hands or softly crying, "Encore!" But the river players had other engagements, and his encore went unheeded

"I should never have thought I could take such an interest in things that did not concern me," said Bailey to Wilderspin, who used to come in in his nervous, friendly way and try to comfort the sufferer by being talked to "I thought this idle capacity was distinctive of little children and old maids But it's just circumstances I simply can't work, and things have to drift, it's no good to fret and struggle And so I lie here

and am as amused as a baby with a rattle, at this river and its affairs

"Sometimes, of course, it gets a bit dull but not often

"I would give anything, Wilderspin, for a swamp—just one swamp—once Heads swimming and a steam launch to the rescue, and a chap or so hauled out with a boat hook . . There goes Fitzgibbon's launch! They have a new boat hook, I see, and the little blackie is still in the dumps I don't think he's very well, Wilderspin He's been like that for two or three days, squatting sulky fashion and meditating over the churning of the water Unwholesome for him to be always staring at the frothy water running away from the stern"

They watched the little steamer fuss across the patch of sunlit river, suffer momentary occultation from the acacia, and glide out of sight behind the dark window frame

"I'm getting a wonderful eye for details," said Bailey "I spotted that new boat hook at once The other nigger is a funny little chap He never used to swagger with the old boat hook like that"

"Malays, aren't they?" said Wilderspin

"Don't know," said Bailey "I thought one called all that sort of mariner Lascar"

Then he began to tell Wilderspin what he knew of the private affairs of the house boat, *Purple Emperor* "Funny," he said, "how these people come from all points of the compass—from Oxford and Windsor, from Asia and Africa—and gather and pass opposite the window just to entertain me One man floated out of the infinite the day before yesterday, caught one perfect crab opposite, lost and recovered a scull, and passed on again Probably he will never come into my life again So far as I am concerned, he has lived and had his little troubles, perhaps thirty—perhaps forty—years on the earth, merely to make an ass of himself for three minutes

in front of my window Wonderful thing, Wilderspin if you come to think of it"

"Yes," said Wilderspin "*isn't it?*"

A day or two after this Bailey had a brilliant morning Indeed, towards the end of the affair, it became almost as exciting as any window show very well could be We will, however, begin at the beginning

Bailey was all alone in the house, for his housekeeper had gone into the town three miles away to pay bills, and the servant had her holiday The morning began dull A canoe went up about half past nine, and later a boat load of camping men came down But this was mere margin Things became cheerful about ten o'clock

It began with something white fluttering in the remote distance where the three poplars marked the river bend "Pocket handkerchief" said Bailey, when he saw it No Too big! Flag perhaps"!

However it was not a flag for it jumped about "Man in whites running fast, and this way," said Bailey "That's luck! But his whites are precious loose!"

Then a singular thing happened There was a minute pink gleam among the dark trees in the distance and a little puff of pale grey that began to drift and vanish eastward The man in white jumped and continued running Presently the report of the shot arrived

"What the devil!" said Bailey "Looks as if some one was shooting at him"

He sat up stiffly and stared hard The white figure was coming along the pathway through the corn "It's one of those niggers from the Fitzgibbon's," said Bailey. "or may I be hanged! I wonder why he keeps sawing with his arm"

Then three other figures became indistinctly visible against the dark background of the trees

Abruptly on the opposite bank a man walked into

the picture He was black bearded, dressed in flannels, had a red belt, and a vast grey felt hat He walked, leaning very much forward and with his hands swinging before him Behind him one could see the grass swept by the towing rope of the boat he was tra in, He was steadfastly regarding the white figure that was hurrying through the corn Suddenly he stopped Then, with a peculiar gesture, Bailey could see that he began pulling in the tow rope hand over hand Over the water could be heard the voices of the people in the still invisible boat

"What are you after, Hagshot?" said someone

The individual with the red belt shouted something that was inaudible, and went on lugging in the rope, looking over his shoulder at the advancing white figure as he did so He came down the bank, and the rope bent a lane among the reeds and lashed the water between his pulls

Then just the bows of the boat came into view with the towing mast and a tall, fair haired man standing up and trying to see over the bank The boat bumped unexpectedly among the reeds, and the tall fair haired man disappeared suddenly, having apparently fallen back into the invisible part of the boat There was a curse and some indistinct laughter Hagshot did not laugh, but hastily clambered into the boat and pushed off Abruptly the boat passed out of Bailey's sight

But it was still audible The melody of voices suggested that its occupants were busy telling each other what to do

The running figure was drawing near the bank Bailey could now see clearly that it was one of Fitzgibbon's Orientals, and began to realise what the sinuous thing the man carried in his hand might be Three other men followed one another through the corn, and the foremost carried what was probably the gun They were perhaps two hundred yards or more behind the Malay,

"It's a man hunt, by all that's holy!" said Bailey

The Malay stopped for a moment and surveyed the bank to the right Then he left the path, and, breaking through the corn, vanished in that direction The three pursuers followed suit, and their heads and gesticulating arms above the corn, after a brief interval, also went out of Bailey's field of vision

Bailey so far forgot himself as to swear "Just as things were getting lively!" he said Something like a woman's shriek came through the air Then shouts, a howl a dull whack upon the balcony outside that made Bailey jump, and then the report of a gun

"This is precious hard on an invalid," said Bailey

But more was to happen yet in his picture In fact, a great deal more The Malay appeared again, running now along the bank up stream His stride had more swing and less pace in it than before He was threatening someone ahead with the ugly krees he carried The blade Bailey noticed, was dull—it did not shine as steel should

Then came the tall, fair man, brandishing a boat hook, and after him three other men in boating costume running clumsily with oars The man with the grey hat and red belt was not with them After an interval the three men with the gun reappeared still in the corn, but now near the river bank They emerged upon the towing path, and hurried after the others The opposite bank was left blank and desolate again

The sick room was disgraced by more profanity "I would give my life to see the end of this," said Bailey There were indistinct shouts up stream Once they seemed to be coming nearer, but they disappointed him

Bailey sat and grumbled He was still grumbling when his eye caught something black and round among the waves "Hullo!" he said He looked narrowly and saw two triangular black bodies frothing every now and then about a yard in front of this

He was still doubtful when the little band of pursuers came into sight again, and began to point to this floating object. They were talking eagerly. Then the man with the gun took aim.

"He's swimming the river, by George!" said Bailey.

The Malay looked round, saw the gun, and went under. He came up so close to Bailey's bank of the river that one of the bars of the balcony hid him for a moment. As he emerged the man with the gun fired. The Malay kept steadily onward—Bailey could see the wet hair on his forehead now and the knees between his teeth—and was presently hidden by the balcony.

This seemed to Bailey an unendurable wrong. The man was lost to him for ever now, so he thought. Why couldn't the brute have got himself decently caught on the opposite bank, or shot in the water?

"It's worse than Edwin Drood," said Bailey.

Over the river, too, things had become an absolute blank. All seven men had gone down stream again, probably to get the boat and follow across. Bailey listened and waited. There was silence. "Surely it's not over like this," said Bailey.

Five minutes passed—ten minutes. Then a tug with two barges went up stream. The attitudes of the men upon these were the attitudes of those who see nothing remarkable in earth, water, or sky. Clearly the whole affair had passed out of sight of the river. Probably the hunt had gone into the beech woods behind the house.

"Confound it!" said Bailey. "To be continued again, and no chance this time of the sequel. But this is hard on a sick man."

He heard a step on the staircase behind him, and looking round saw the door open. Mrs Green came in and sat down, panting. She still had her bonnet on, her purse in her hand, and her little brown basket upon her arm. "Oh, there!" she said, and left Bailey to imagine the rest.

"Have a little whisky and water, Mrs Green, and tell me about it," said Bailey

Sipping a little, the lady began to recover her powers of explanation

One of those black creatures at the Fitzgibbon's had gone mad and was running about with a big knife, stabbing people He had killed a groom and stabbed the under butler, and almost cut the arm off a boating gentleman

"Running amuck with a krees," said Bailey! "I thought that was it"

And he was hiding in the wood when she came through it from the town

"What! Did he run after you?" asked Bailey, with a certain touch of glee in his voice

"No, that was the horrible part of it," Mrs Green explained She had been right through the woods and had *never known he was there* It was only when she met young Mr Fitzgibbon carrying his gun in the shrubbery that she heard anything about it Apparently, what upset Mrs Green was the lost opportunity for emotion She was determined, however, to make the most of what was left her

"To think he was there all the time!" she said, over and over again

Bailey endured this patiently enough for perhaps ten minutes At last he thought it advisable to assert himself "It's twenty past one, Mrs Green," he said "Don't you think it time you got me something to eat?"

This brought Mrs Green suddenly to her knees

"Oh Lord, sir!" she said "Oh! don't go making me go out of this room, sir, till I know he's caught He might have got into the house, sir He might be creeping, creeping, with that knife of his, along the passage this very——"

She broke off suddenly and glared over him at the

window Her lower jaw dropped Bar'ey turned his head sharply

For the space of half a second things seemed just as they were There was the tree the balc ny the shining river, the distant church tower Then he n ticed that the acacia was displaced about a foot to the right and that it was quivering, and the leaves were rustling The tree was shaken violently, and a heavy panting was audible

In another moment a hairy brown hand had appeared and clutched the balcony railings and in another the face of the Malay was peering through these at the man on the couch His expression was an unpleasant grin, by reason of the krees he held between his teeth and he was bleeding from an ugly wound in his cheek His hair wet to drying stuck out like horns from his head His body was bare save for the wet trousers that clung to him Bailey s first impulse was to spring from the couch, but his legs reminded him that this was impossible

By means of the balcony and tree the man slowly raised himself until he was visible to Mrs Green With a choking cry she made for the door and fumbled with the han lle

Bailey thought swiftly and clutched a medicine bottle in either hand One he flung and it smashed against the acacia Silently and deliberately and keeping his bright eyes fixed on Bailey, the Malay clambered into the balcony Bailey, still clutching his second bottle, but with a sickening, sinking feeling about his heart watched first one leg come over the railing and then the other

It was Bailey's impression that the Malay took about an hour to get his second leg over the rail The period that elapsed before the sitting position was changed to a standing one seemed enormous—days, weeks poss bly a year or so Yet Bailey had no clear impression of

anything going on in his mind during that vast period, except a vague wonder at his inability to throw the second medicine bottle Suddenly the Malay glanced over his shoulder There was the crack of a rifle He flung up his arms and came down upon the couch Mrs Green began a dismal shriek that seemed likely to last until Doomsday Bailey stared at the brown body with its shoulder blade driven in, that writhed painfully across his legs and rapidly staining and soaking the spotless bandages Then he looked at the long krees, with the reddish streaks upon its blade that lay an inch beyond the trembling brown fingers upon the floor Then at Mrs Green, who had backed hard against the door and was staring at the body and shrieking in gusty outbursts as if she would wake the dead And then the body was shaken by one last convulsive effort

The Malay gripped the krees, tried to raise himself with his left hand, and collapsed Then he raised his head, stared for a moment at Mrs Green, and twisting his face round looked at Bailey With a gasping groan the dying man succeeded in clutching the bed clothes with his disabled hand, and by a violent effort, which hurt Bailey's legs exceedingly, writhed sideways towards what must be his last victim Then something seemed released in Bailey's mind and he brought down the second bottle with all his strength on to the Malay's face The krees fell heavily upon the floor

"Easy with those legs," said Bailey, as young Fitzgibbon and one of the boating party lifted the body off him

Young Fitzgibbon was very white in the face "I didn't mean to kill him," he said

"It's just as well," said Bailey



STORY THE SEVENTH

The Temptation of Harringay

IT is quite impossible to say whether this thing really happened It depends entirely on the word of R M Harringay, who is an artist

Following his version of the affair, the narrative deposes that Harringay went into his studio about ten o'clock to see what he could make of the head that he had been working at the day before The head in question was that of an Italian organ grinder, and Harringay thought—but was not quite sure—that the title would be the "Vigil" So far he is frank, and his narrative bears the stamp of truth He had seen the man expectant for pennies, and with a promptness that suggested genius, had had him in at once

"Kneel Look up at that bracket," said Harringay "As if you expected pennies"

"Don't *grin!*" said Harringay "I don't want to paint your gums Look as though you were unhappy"

Now, after a night's rest, the picture proved decidedly unsatisfactory "It's good work," said Harringay "That little bit in the neck . But"

He walked about the studio and looked at the thing from this point and from that Then he said a wicked word In the original the word is given

"Painting he says he said "Just a painting of an organ grinder—a mere portrait If it was a live organ grinder I wouldn't mind But somehow I never make things alive I wonder if my imagination is wrong ' This, too, has a truthful air His imagination is wrong

"That creative touch! To take canvas and pigment and make a man—as Adam was made of red ochre! But this thing! If you met it walking about the streets you would know it was only a studio production The little boys would tell it to 'Garnome and git frimed' Some little touch Well—it won't do as it is"

He went to the blinds and began to pull them down They were made of blue holland with the rollers at the bottom of the window, so that you pull them down to get more light He gathered his palette, brushes, and mahl stick from his table Then he turned to the picture and put a speck of brown in the corner of the mouth and shifted his attention thence to the pupil of the eye Then he decided that the chin was a trifle too impassive for a vigil

Presently he put down his impediments, and lighting a pipe surveyed the progress of his work "I'm hanged if the thing isn't sneering at me," said Harringay, and he still believes it sneered

The animation of the figure had certainly increased, but scarcely in the direction he wished There was no mistake about the sneer "Vigil of the Unbeliever," said Harringay "Rather subtle and clever that! But the left eyebrow isn't cynical enough."

He went and dabbed at the eyebrow, and added a little to the lobe of the ear to suggest materialism Further consideration ensued "Vigil's off, I'm afraid," said Harringay "Why not Mephistopheles? But that's a bit *too* common 'A Friend of the Doge'—

not so seedy The armour won't do though Too Camelot How about a scarlet robe and call him 'One of the Sacred College'? Humour in that, and an appreciation of Middle Italian History"

"There's always Benvenuto Cellini,' said Harringay, "with a clever suggestion of a gold cup in one corner But that would scarcely suit the complexion"

He describes himself as babbling in this way in order to keep down an unaccountably unpleasant sensation of fear The thing was certainly acquiring anything but a pleasing expression Yet it was as certainly becoming far more of a living thing than it had been—if a sinister one—far more alive than anything he had ever painted before "Call it 'Portrait of a Gentleman,'" said Harringay, "A Certain Gentleman

"Won't do," said *Harringay*, still keeping up his courage "Kind of thing they call Bad Taste That sneer will have *to come out* That gone, and a little more fire in the eye—never noticed how warm his eye was *before—and he might do for—?* What price Passionate Pilgrim? But that devilish face won't do—*this side of the Channel*

"Some little inaccuracy does it" he said "eyebrows *probably too oblique"—therewith pulling the blind* lower to get a better light, and resuming palette and brushes

The face on the canvas seemed animated by a spirit *of its own* Where the *expression of diablerie came in* he found impossible to discover Experiment was *necessary The eyebrows—it could scarcely* be the eyebrows? But he altered them No, that was no better, *in fact, if anything, a trifle more satanic* The corner of the mouth? Pah! more than ever a leer—and *now, retouched, it was ominously grim* The eye, then? Catastrophe! he had filled his brush with *vermilion instead of brown, and yet he had felt sure it* was brown! The eye seemed now to have rolled in *its socket and was glaring at him an eye of fire In*

a flash of passion, possibly with something of the courage of panic he struck the brush full of bright red athwart the picture, and then a very curious thing, a very strange thing indeed, occurred—if it *did* occur

The diabolified Italian before him shut both his eyes, pursed his mouth and wiped the colour off his face with his hand

Then the *red eye* opened again, with a sound like the opening of lips and the face smiled "That was rather hasty of you," said the picture

Harringay states that, now that the worst had happened, his self possession returned He had a saving persuasion that devils were reasonable creatures

"Why do you keep moving about then," he said, "making faces and all that—sneering and squinting, while I am painting you?"

"I don't" said the picture

"You *do*" said Harringay

"It's yourself" said the picture

"It's *not* myself" said Harringay

"It *is* yourself, said the picture "No! don't go hitting me with paint again, because it's true You have been trying to fluke an expression on my face all the morning Really, you haven't an idea what your picture ought to look like"

"I have," said Harringay

"You have *not*," said the picture "You *never* have with your pictures You always start with the vaguest presentiment of what you are going to do, it is to be something beautiful—you are sure of that—and devout, perhaps or tragic, but beyond that it is all experiment and chance My dear fellow! you don't think you can paint a picture like that?"

Now it must be remembered that for what follows we have only Harringay's word

"I shall paint a picture exactly as I like," said Harringay, calmly

This seemed to disconcert the picture a little "You

can't paint a picture without an inspiration," it remarked

"But I *had* an inspiration—for this"

"Inspiration!" sneered the sardonic figure, "a fancy that came from your seeing an organ grinder looking up at a window! *Vigil! Ha, ha! You just started* painting on the chance of something coming—that's what you did And when I saw you at it I came I want a talk with you!"

"Art, with you," said the picture—"it's a poor business You potter I don't know how it is, but you don't seem able to throw your soul into it You know too much It hampers you In the midst of your enthusiasms you ask yourself whether something like this has not been done before And "

"Look here," said Harringay, who had expected something better than criticism from the devil "Are you going to talk studio to me?" He filled his number twelve hoghair with red paint

"*The true artist,*" *said the picture,* "*is always an* ignorant man An artist who theorises about his work is no longer artist but critic Wagner I say!—What's that red paint for?"

"I'm going to paint you out," said Harringay "I don't want to hear all that Tommy Rot If you think just because I'm an artist by trade I'm going to talk studio to you, you make a precious mistake"

"One minute," said the picture, evidently alarmed "I want to make you an offer—a genuine offer It's right what I'm saying You lack inspirations Well No doubt you've heard of the Cathedral of Cologne, and the Devil's Bridge, and——"

"Rubbish," said Harringay "Do you think I want to go to perdition simply for the pleasure of painting a good picture, and getting it slated Take that"

His blood was up His danger only nerved him to action so he says So he planted a dab of vermilion in his creature's mouth The Italian spluttered and tried

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before he filled it with enamel, and near the [illegible] red eye opened and glared at him and [illegible] last nothing remained save a gleaming pane [illegible] enamel For a little while a faint stirring [illegible] surface puckered it slightly here and there, [illegible] even that died away and the thing was [illegible]

Then Harringay—according to Harr[illegible] —lit his pipe and sat down and stared at [illegible] canvas, and tried to make out clearly [illegible] pered Then he walked round behind [illegible] back of it was at all remarkable Then [illegible] to regret he had not photographed the [illegible] he painted him out

This is Harringay's story—not mine [illegible] it by a small canvas (24 by 20) enamelled [illegible] and by violent asseverations It is al[illegible] never has produced a masterpiece, and [illegible] of his intimate friends probably never [illegible]



STORY THE EIGHTH

The Flying Man

THE Ethnologist looked at the *bhimraj* feather thoughtfully "They seemed loth to part with it," he said

"It is sacred to the Chiefs," said the lieutenant, "just as yellow silk, you know, is sacred to the Chinese Emperor"

The Ethnologist did not answer He hesitated Then opening the topic abruptly, "What on earth *is* this cock and bull story they have of a flying man?"

The lieutenant smiled faintly "What did they tell you?"

"I see," said the Ethnologist, "that you know of your fame"

The lieutenant rolled himself a cigarette "I don't mind hearing about it once more How does it stand at present?"

"It's so confoundedly childish," said the Ethnologist, becoming irritated "How did you play it off upon them?"

The lieutenant made no answer, but lounged back in his folding chair, still smiling

"Here am I, come four hundred miles out of my way to get what is left of the folk-lore of these people, before they are utterly demoralised by missionaries and the military, and all I find are a lot of impossible legends about a sandy-haired scrub of an infantry lieutenant. How he is invulnerable—how he can jump over elephants—how he can *fly*. That's the toughest nut. One old gentleman described your wings, said they had black plumage and were not quite as long as a mule. Said he often saw you by moonlight hovering over the crests out towards the Shendu country. Confound it, man!"

The lieutenant laughed cheerfully. "Go on," he said. "Go on."

The Ethnologist did. At last he wearied. "To trade so," he said, "on these unsophisticated children of the mountains. How could you bring yourself to do it, man?"

"I'm sorry," said the lieutenant, "but truly the thing was forced upon me. I can assure you I was driven to it. *And at the time I had not the faintest* idea of how the Chin imagination would take it. Or curiosity. I can only plead it was an indiscretion and not malice that made me replace the folk-lore by a new legend. But as you seem aggrieved, I will try and explain the business to you.

"It was in the time of the last Lushai expedition but one, and Walters thought these people you have been visiting were friendly. So, with an airy confidence in my capacity for taking care of myself, he sent me up the gorge—fourteen miles of it—with three of the Derbyshire men and half a dozen Sepoys, two mules, and his blessing, to see what popular feeling was like at that village you visited. A force of ten—not counting the mules—fourteen miles, and during a war! You saw the road?"

"*Road!*" said the Ethnologist.

"It's better now than it was. When we went up



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effect Hooker, one of the Derbyshire men, fancied himself rather with the rifle and [illegible]ed behind for half a minute to try his luck as we turned the bend But he got nothing

"I'm not a Xenophon to spin [illegible] of a yarn about my retreating army We had to [illegible] twice in the next two miles whe[illegible] a bit pressing, by exchanging shots with [illegible] was a fairly monotonous affair—hard breathin[illegible] we got near the place where the hills r[illegible] the river and pinch the valley into a [illegible] And there we very luckily caught a glimpse of ha[illegible] round black heads coming slanting ways over the hill to the left of us—the east that is—and almost parallel with us

"At that I called a halt 'Look here' says I to Hooker and the other Englishmen, 'what are we to do now?' and I pointed to the heads

"'Headed off, or I'm a nigger,' said one of the men

"'We shall be,' said another 'You know the Chin way George?'

"'They can pot everyone of us at fifty yards' says Hooker, 'in the place where the river is narrow It's just suicide to go on down'

"I looked at the hill to the right of us It grew steeper lower down the valley, but it still seemed climbable And all the Chins we had seen hitherto had been on the other side of the stream

"'It's that or stopping' says one of the Sepoys

"So we started slanting up the hill There was something faintly suggestive of a road running obliquely up the face of it, and that we followed Some Chins presently came into view up the valley, and I heard some shots Then I saw one of the Sepoys was sitting down about thirty yards below us He had simply sat down without a word apparently not wishing to give trouble At that I called a halt again I told Hooker

to try another shot, and went back and found the man was hit in the leg I took him up, carried him along to put h m on the mule—already pretty well laden with the tent and other things which we had no time to take off When I got up to the rest with him, Hooker had his empty Martini in his hand, and was grinning and p inting to a motionless black spot up the valley All the rest of the Chins were behind boulders or back round the bend 'Five hundred yards,' says Hooker, 'if an inch And I ll swear I hit him in the head

' I told him to go and do it again, and with that we went on again

"Now the hillside kept getting steeper as we pushed on, and the road we were following more and more of a shelf At last it was mere cliff above and below us 'It s the best road I have seen yet in Chin Lushai land' said I to encourage the men, though I had a fear of what was coming

"And in a few minutes the way bent round a corner of the cliff Then, finis! the ledge came to an end

"As soon as he grasped the position one of the Derbyshire men fell a swearing at the trap we had fallen into The Sepoys halted quietly Hooker grunted and reloaded, and went back to the bend

"Then two of the Sepoy chaps helped their comrade down and began to unload the mule

"Now, when I came to look about me, I began to think we had not been so very unfortunate after all We were on a shelf perhaps ten yards across it at widest Above it the cliff projected so that we could not be shot down upon, and below was an almost sheer precipice of perhaps two or three hundred feet Lying down we were invisible to anyone across the ravine The only approach was along the ledge, and on that one man was as good as a host We were in a natural stronghold, with only one disadvantage, our sole pro vision against hunger and thirst was one live mule

Still we were at most eight or nine miles from the main expedition, and no doubt, after a day or so, they would send up after us if we did not return

"After a day or so"

The lieutenant paused "Ever been thirsty, Graham?"

"Not that kind," said the Ethnologist

"H m We had the whole of that day the night and the next day of it, and only a trifle of dew we wrung out of our clothes and the tent And below us was the river going giggle giggle round a rock in mid stream I never knew such a barrenness of incident, or such a quantity of sensation The sun might have had *Joshua's* command still upon it for all the motion one could see, and it blazed like a near furnace Towards the evening of the first day one of the Derbyshire men said something—nobody heard what—and went off round the bend of the cliff We heard shots, and when Hooker looked round the corner he was gone And in the morning the Sepoy whose leg was shot was in delirium, and jumped or fell over the cliff Then we took the mule and shot it, and that must needs go over the cliff too in its last struggles, leaving eight of us

"We could see the body of the Sepoy down below, with the head in the water He was lying face downwards, and so far as I could make out was scarcely smashed at all Badly as the Chins might covet his head, they had the sense to leave it alone until the darkness came

"At first we talked of all the chances there were of the main body hearing the firing and reckoned whether they would begin to miss us and all that kind of thing, but we dried up as the evening came on The Sepoys played games with bits of stone among themselves, and afterwards told stories The night was rather chilly The second day nobody spoke Our lips were black and our throats afire, and we lay about

on the ledge and glared at one another. Perhaps it's as well we kept our thoughts to ourselves. One of the British soldiers began writing some blasphemous rot on the rock with a bit of pipeclay about his last dying will until I stopped it. As I looked over the edge down into the valley and saw the river rippling I was nearly tempted to go after the Sepoy. It seemed a pleasant and desirable thing to go rushing down through the air with something to drink—or no more thirst at any rate—at the bottom. I remembered in time, though, that I was the officer in command, and my duty to set a good example, and that kept me from any such foolishness.

"Yet thinking of that, put an idea into my head. I got up and looked at the tent and tent ropes, and wondered why I had not thought of it before. Then I came and peered over the cliff again. This time the height seemed greater and the pose of the Sepoy rather more painful. But it was that or nothing. And to cut it short, I parachuted.

"I got a big circle of canvas out of the tent, about three times the size of that table cover, and plugged the hole in the centre, and I tied eight ropes round it to meet in the middle and make a parachute. The other chaps lay about and watched me as though they thought it was a new kind of delirium. Then I explained my notion to the two British soldiers and how I meant to do it, and as soon as the short dusk had darkened into night, I risked it. They held the thing high up, and I took a run the whole length of the ledge. The thing filled with air like a sail, but at the edge I will confess I funked and pulled up.

"As soon as I stopped I was ashamed of myself—as well I might be in front of privates—and went back and started again. Off I jumped this time—with a kind of sob, I remember—clean into the air, with the big white sail bellying out above me.

"I must have thought at a frightful pace. It seemed

when they got to the ridge at last, they found two more of the Sepoys had jumped over."

"The rest were all right?" asked the Ethnologist

"Yes," said the lieutenant, "the rest were all right, barring a certain thirst, you know"

And at the memory he helped himself to soda and whisky again



STORY THE NINTH

The Diamond Maker

SOME business had detained me in Chancery Lane until nine in the evening, and thereafter having some inkling of a headache, I was disinclined either for entertainment or further work So much of the sky as the high cliffs of that narrow canon of traffic left visible spoke of a serene night, and I determined to make my way down to the Embankment, and rest my eyes and cool my head by watching the variegated lights upon the river Beyond comparison the night is the best time for this place a merciful darkness hides the dirt of the waters and the lights of this transition age, red, glaring orange, gas yellow, and electric white, are set in shadowy outlines of every possible shade between grey and deep purple Through the arches of Waterloo Bridge a hundred points of light mark the sweep of the Embankment and above its parapet rise the towers of Westminster warm grey against the starlight The black river goes by with only a rare ripple breaking its silence and disturbing the reflections of the lights that swim upon its surface

"A warm night," said a voice at my side

I turned my head, and saw the profile of a man who was leaning over the parapet beside me It was a refined face, not unhandsome, though pinched and pale eno gh and the coat collar turned up and pinned round the throat marked his status in life as sharply as a uniform I felt I was committed to the price of a bed and breakfast if I answered him

I looked at him curiously Would he have anything to tell me worth the money, or was he the common incapable—incapable even of telling his own story? There was a quality of intelligence in his forehead and eyes, and a certain tremulousness in his nether lip that decided me

"Very warm," said I, "but not too warm for us here"

"No," he said still looking across the water, "it is pleasant enough here just now"

"It is good' he continued after a pause, "to find anything so restful as this in London After one has been fretting about business all day, about getting on meeting obligations, and parrying dangers, I do not know what one would do if it were not for such pacific corners" He spoke with long pauses between the sentences "You must know a little of the irksome labour of the world or you would not be here But I doubt if you can be so brain weary and footsore as I am Bah! Sometimes I doubt if the game is worth the candle I feel inclined to throw the whole thing over—name, wealth, and position—and take to some modest trade But I know if I abandoned my ambition—hardly as she uses me—I should have nothing but remorse left for the rest of my days"

He became silent I looked at him in astonishment If ever I saw a man hopelessly hard up it was the man in front of me He was ragged and he was dirty, unshaven and unkempt, he looked as though he had been left in a dust bin for a week And he was talking to

me of the irksome worries of a large business I almost laughed outright Either he was mad or playing a sorry jest on his own poverty

"If high aims and high positions" said I, "have their drawbacks of hard work and anxiety they have their compensations Influence, the power of doing good, of assisting those weaker and poorer than ourselves, and there is even a certain gratification in display   "

My banter under the circumstances was in very vile taste I spoke on the spur of the contrast of his appearance and speech I was sorry even while I was speaking

He turned a haggard but very composed face upon me Said he "I forget myself Of course you would not understand"

He measured me for a moment "No doubt it is very absurd You will not believe me even when I tell you, so that it is fairly safe to tell you And it will be a comfort to tell someone I really have a big *business in hand, a very big business But there are* troubles just now The fact is   I make diamonds"

"*I s'ppose," said I, "you are out of work just at* present?"

"*I am sick of being disbelieved" he said impatiently,* and suddenly unbuttoning his wretched coat he pulled out a little canvas bag that was hanging by a cord round his neck From this he produced a brown pebble "I wonder if you know enough to know what that is?" He handed it to me

Now, a year or so ago, I had occupied my leisure in taking a London science degree so that I have a smattering of physics and mineralogy The thing was not unlike an uncut diamond of the darker sort, though far too large, being almost as big as the top of my thumb I took it and saw it had the form of a regular octahedron, with the carved faces peculiar to the most precious of minerals I took out my penknife and tried to scratch

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"Very warm," said I, "but not too warm for us here"

"No," he said still looking across the water, "it is pleasant enough here just now".

"It is good ' he continued after a pause, "to find anything so restful as this in London After one has been fretting about business all day, about getting on meeting obligations and parrying dangers, I do not know what one would do if it were not for such pacific corners" He spoke with long pauses between the sentences "You must know a little of the irksome labour of the world, or you would not be here But I doubt if you can be so brain weary and footsore as I am Bah! Sometimes I doubt if the game is worth the candle I feel inclined to throw the whole thing over—name, wealth, and position—and take to some modest trade But I know if I abandoned my ambition—hardly as she uses me—I should have nothing but remorse left for the rest of my days"

He became silent I looked at him in astonishment If ever I saw a man hopelessly hard up it was the man in front of me He was ragged and he was dirty, un shaven and unkempt, he looked as though he had been left in a dust bin for a week And he was talking to

pockets. He sighed "I know you will not believe me"

"Diamonds" he began—and as he spoke his voice lost its faint flavour of the tramp and assumed something of the easy tone of an educated man—"are to be made by throwing carbon out of combination in a suitable flux and under a suitable pressure the carbon crystallises out, not as black lead or charcoal powder, but as small diamonds So much has been known to chemists for years but no one yet has hit upon exactly the right flux in which to melt up the carbon, or exactly the right pressure for the best results Consequently the diamonds made by chemists are small and dark, and *worthless as jewels Now I, you know have given up* my life to this problem—given my life to it

"I began to work at the conditions of diamond making when I was seventeen and now I am thirty two It seemed to me that it might take all the thought and energies of a man for ten years or twenty years, but, even if it did the game was still worth the candle Suppose one to have at last just hit the right

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I had, he proceeded about a thousand pounds when I was twenty one, and this I thought, eked out by a little teaching, would keep my researches going A year or two was spent in study, at Berlin chiefly, and then I continued on my own account The trouble was the secrecy You see, if once I had let out what I was doing other men might have been spurred on by my belief in the practicability of the idea; and I do not pretend to be such a genius as to have been sure of coming in first, in the case of a race for the discovery And you see it was important that if I really meant to make a pile, people should not know it was an artif

process and capable of turning out diamonds by the ton So I had to work all alone At first I had a little laboratory but as my resources began to run out I had to conduct my experiments in a wretched unfurnished room in Kentish Town, where I slept at last on a straw mattress on the floor among all my apparatus The money simply flowed away I grudged myself everything except scientific appliances I tried to keep things going by a little teaching, but I am not a very good teacher and I have no university degree, nor very much education except in chemistry, and I found I had to give a lot of time and labour for precious little money But I got nearer and nearer the thing Three years ago I settled the problem of the composition of the flux, and got near the pressure by putting this flux of mine and a certain carbon composition into a closed up gun barrel, filling up with water, sealing tightly, and heating"

He paused

"Rather risky," said I

"Yes It burst, and smashed all my windows and a lot of my apparatus, but I got a kind of diamond powder nevertheless Following out the problem of getting a big pressure upon the molten mixture from which the things were to crystallise, I hit upon some researches of Daubrée's at the Paris *Laboratoire des Poudres et Salpetres* He exploded dynamite in a tightly screwed steel cylinder, too strong to burst, and I found he could crush rocks into a muck not unlike the South African bed in which diamonds are fou[nd] It was a tremendous strain on my resources but I g[ot a] steel cylinder made for my purpose after his [pattern]. I put in all my stuff and my explosives, buil[t a fire] in my furnace, put the whole concern in, [and went] out for a walk"

I could not help laughing at his manner "Did you not think it would [blow up the] house? Were there other people in [the house?"]

"It was in the interest of science," he said ultimately "There was a costermonger family on the floor below, a begging letter writer in the room behind mine, and two flower women were upstairs Perhaps it was a bit thoughtless But possibly some of them were out

"When I came back the thing was just where I left it, among the white hot coals The explosive hadn't burst the case And then I had a problem to face You know time is an important element in crystallisation If you hurry the process the crystals are small— it is only by prolonged standing that they grow to any size I resolved to let this apparatus cool for two years, letting the temperature go down slowly during that time And I was now quite out of money, and with a big fire and the rent of my room, as well as my hunger to satisfy, I had scarcely a penny in the world

"I can hardly tell you all the shifts I was put to while I was making the diamonds I have sold newspapers, held horses, opened cab doors For many weeks I addressed envelopes I had a place as assistant to a man who owned a barrow, and used to call down one side of the road while he called down the other Once for a week I had absolutely nothing to do and I begged What a week that was! One day the fire was going out and I had eaten nothing all day and a little chap taking his girl out, gave me sixpence—to show-off Thank heaven for vanity! How the fish shops smelt! But I went and spent it all on coals and had the furnace bright red again, and then—— Well, hunger makes a fool of a man

"At last, three weeks ago, I let the fire out I took my cylinder and unscrewed it while it was still so hot that it punished my hands, and I scraped out the crumbling lava like mass with a chisel, and hammered it into a powder upon an iron plate And I found three big diamonds and five small ones As I sat on the floor hammering, my door opened, and my neigh-

bour the begging letter writer, came in He was drunk —as he usually is "'Nerchist,' said he 'You're drunk, said I 'Structive scoundrel,' said he 'Go to your father' said I, meaning the Father of Lies 'Never you mind said he, and gave me a cunning wink and hiccupped, and leaning up against the door, with his other eye against the door post, began to babble of how he had been prying in my room, and how he had gone to the police that morning, and how they had taken down everything he had to say— 's ffiwas a ge m' said he Then I suddenly realised I was in a hole Either I should have to tell these police my little secret, and get the whole thing blown upon, or be lagged as an Anarchist So I went up to my neighbour and took him by the collar, and rolled him about a bit and then I gathered up my diamonds and cleared out The evening newspapers called my den the Kentish Town Bomb Factory And now I cannot part with the things for love or money

"If I go in to respectable jewellers they ask me to wait, and go and whisper to a clerk to fetch a police man and then I say I cannot wait And I found out a receiver of stolen goods, and he simply stuck to the one I gave him and told me to prosecute if I wanted it back I am going about now with several hundred thousand pounds worth of diamonds round my neck and without either food or shelter You are the first person I have taken into my confidence But I like your face and I am hard-driven"

He looked into my eyes

"It would be madness," said I, "for me to buy a diamond under the circumstances Besides, I do not carry hundreds of pounds about in my pocket Yet I more than half believe your story I will, if you like, do this come to my office to morrow . "

"You think I am a thief!" said he keenly "You will tell the police I am not coming into a trap'

"Somehow I am assured you are no thief Here is

my card Take that, anyhow You need not come to any appointment Come when you will"

He took the card, and an earnest of my good will

"Think better of it and come said I

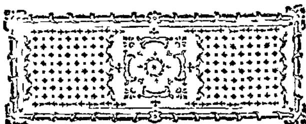
He shook his head doubtfully "I will pay back your half-crown with interest some day—such interest as will amaze you," said he "*Anyhow, you will keep* the secret? Don't follow me'

He crossed the road and went into the darkness towards the little steps under the archway leading into Essex Street, and I let him go And that was the last I ever saw of him

Afterwards I had two letters from him asking me to send bank notes—not cheques—to certain addresses I weighed the matter over, and took what I conceived [illegible]

[illegible]

story goes I wonder sometimes what has become of him Was he an ingenious monomaniac, or a fraudulent dealer in pebbles, or has he really made diamonds as he asserted? The latter is just sufficiently credible to make me think at times that I have missed the most brilliant opportunity of my life He may of course be dead, and his diamonds carelessly thrown aside—one, I repeat, was almost as big as my thumb Or he may be still wandering about trying to sell the things It is just possible he may yet emerge upon society and, passing athwart my heavens in the serene altitude sacred to the wealthy and the well advertised, reproach me silently for my want of enterprise I sometimes think I might at least have risked five pounds



STORY THE TENTH

Æpyornis Island

THE man with the scarred face leant over the table and looked at my bundle

"Orchids?" he asked

"A few," I said

"Cypripediums," he said

"Chiefly," said I

"Anything new? I thought not *I* did these islands twenty five—twenty seven years ago If you find anything new here—well, it's brand new I didn't leave much"

"I m not a collector," said I

"I was young then," he went on "Lord! how I used to fly round" He seemed to take my measure "I was in the East Indies two years and in Brazil seven Then I went to Madagascar"

"I know a few explorers by name," I said, anticipating a yarn "Whom did you collect for?"

"Dawsons' I wonder if you've heard the name of Butcher ever?"

"Butcher -Butcher?" The name seemed vaguely present in my memory, then I recalled *Butcher v Dawson* "Why!" said I, "you are the man who sued them for four years' salary—got cast away on a desert island "

"Your servant," said the man with the scar bowing "Funny case, wasn't it? Here was me making a little fortune on that island, doing nothing for it neither, and them quite unable to give me notice It often used to amuse me thinking over it while I was there I did calculations of it—big—all over the blessed atoll in ornamental figuring "

"How did it happen?" said I "I don t rightly remember the case"

"Well You ve heard of the *Æpyornis*?"

"Rather Andrews was telling me of a new species he was working on only a month or so ago Just before I sailed They've got a th gh bone, it seems nearly a yard long Monster the thing must have been!"

"I believe you," said the man with the scar "It *was* a monster Sindbad s roc was just a legend of 'em But when did they find these bones?"

"Three or four years ago—91, I fancy Why?"

"Why? Because *I* found them—Lord!—it's nearly twenty years ago If Dawsons hadn't been s lly about that salary they might have made a perfect r ng in 'em *I* couldn t help the infernal boat going adrift"

He paused "I suppose it s the same place A kind of swamp about ninety miles north of Antananarivo Do you happen to know? You have to go to it along the coast by boats You don t happen to remember perhaps?"

"I don't I fancy Andrews said something about a swamp"

"It must be the same It's on the east coast And somehow there's something in the water that keeps things from decaying Like creosote it smells It reminded me of Trinidad Did they get any more

eggs? Some of the eggs I found were a foot and a half long The swamp goes circling round, you know, and cu s off this bit It's mostly salt, too Well What a time I had of it! I found the things quite by accident We went for eggs, me and two native chaps in one of those rum canoes all tied together, and found the bones at the same time We had a tent and provisions for four days and we pitched on one of the firmer places To think of it brings that odd tarry smell back even now It's funny work You go probing into the mud with iron rods, you know Usually the egg gets smashed I wonder how long it is since these Æpyornises really lived The missionaries say the natives have legends about when they were alive, but I never heard any such stories myself * But certainly those eggs we got were as fresh as if they had been new laid Fresh! Carrying them down to the boat one of my nigger chaps dropped one on a rock and it smashed How I lammed into the beggar! But sweet it was as if it was new laid, not even smelly, and its mother dead these four hundred years, perhaps Said a centipede had bit him However, I'm getting off the straight with the story It had taken us all day to dig into the slush and get these eggs out unbroken, and we were all covered with beastly black mud, and naturally I was cross So far as I knew they were the only eggs that have ever been got out not even cracked I went afterwards to see the ones they have at the Natural History Museum in London, all of them were cracked and just stuck together like a mosaic, and bits missing Mine were perfect, and I meant to blow them when I got back Naturally I was annoyed at the silly duffer dropping three hours' work just on account of a centipede I hit him about rather"

The man with the scar took out a clay pipe I

* No European is known to have seen a live Æpyornis with the doubtful exception of Macer, who visited Madagascar in 1745 —H. G W

placed my pouch before him He filled up absent mindedly

"How about the others? Did you get those home? I don't remember——"

"That's the queer part of the story I had three others Perfectly fresh eggs Well we put em in the boat, *and then I went up to the tent to make some* coffee, leaving my two heathens down by the beach—the one fooling about with his sting and the other helping him It never occurred to me that the beggar would take advantage of the peculiar position I was in to pick a quarrel But I suppose the centipede poison and the kicking I had given him had upset the one—he was always a cantankerous sort—and he persuaded the other

"I remember I was sitting and smoking and boiling up the water over a spirit lamp business I used to take on these expeditions Incidentally I was admiring the swamp under the sunset All black and blood red it was in streaks—a beautiful sight And up beyond the land rose grey and hazy to the hills and the sky behind them red, like a furnace mouth And fifty yards behind the back of me was these blessed heathen—quite regardless of the tranquil air of things—plotting to cut off with the boat and leave me all alone with three days' provisions and a canvas tent, and nothing to drink whatsoever beyond a little keg of water I heard a kind of yelp behind me, and there they were in this canoe affair—it wasn't properly a boat—and, perhaps, twenty yards from land I realised what was up in a moment My gun was in the tent, and, besides, I had no bullets—only duck shot They knew that But I had a little revolver in my pocket, and I pulled that out as I ran down to the beach

"'Come back!' says I, flourishing it

"They jabbered something at me, and the man that broke the egg jeered I aimed at the other—because he was unwounded and had the paddle and I missed.

They laughed However, I wasn't beat I knew I had to keep cool, and I tried him again and made him jump with the whang of it He didn't laugh that time The third time I got his head, and over he went, and the paddle with him It was a precious lucky shot for a revolver I reckon it was fifty yards He went right under I don't know if he was shot, or simply stunned and drowned Then I began to shout to the other chap to come back, but he huddled up in the canoe and refused to answer So I fired out my revolver at him and never got near him

"I felt a precious fool, I can tell you There I was on this rotten black beach, flat swamp all behind me, and the flat sea, cold after the sun set, and just this black canoe drifting steadily out to sea I tell you I damned Dawsons' and Jamrach s and Museums and all the rest of it just to rights I bawled to this nigger to come back, until my voice went up into a scream

"There was nothing for it but to swim after him and take my luck with the sharks So I opened my clasp-knife and put it in my mouth, and took off my clothes and waded in As soon as I was in the water I lost sight of the canoe, but I aimed, as I judged, to head it off I hoped the man in it was too bad to navigate it, and that it would keep on drifting in the same direction Presently it came up over the horizon again to the south westward about The afterglow of sunset was well over now and the dim of night creeping up The stars were coming through the blue I swum like a champion, though my legs and arms were soon aching

"However, I came up to him by the time the stars were fairly out As it got darker I began to see all manner of glowing things in the water—phosphorescence, you know At times it made me giddy I hardly knew which was stars and which was phosphorescence, and whether I was swimming on my head or my heels The canoe was as black as sin, and the ripple under the bows like liquid fire I was naturally chary

of clambering up into it I was anxious to see what he was up to first He seemed to be lying cuddled up in a lump in the bows, and the stern was all out of water The thing kept turning round slowly as it drifted—kind of waltzing, don't you know I went to the stern and pulled it down, expecting him to wake up Then I began to clamber in with my knife in my hand, and ready for a rush But he never stirred So there I sat in the stern of the little canoe drifting away over the calm phosphorescent sea and with all the host of the stars above me, waiting for something to happen

"After a long time I called him by name, but he never answered I was too tired to take any risks by going along to him So we sat there I fancy I dozed once or twice When the dawn came I saw he was as dead as a door nail and all puffed up and purple My three eggs and the bones were lying in the middle of the canoe, and the keg of water and some coffee and biscuits wrapped in a Cape *Argus* by his feet, and a tin of methylated spirit underneath him There was no paddle, nor, in fact, anything except the spirit tin that I could use as one, so I settled to drift until I was picked up I held an inquest on him brought in a verdict against some snake scorpion, or centipede unknown, and sent him overboard

"After that I had a drink of water and a few biscuits, and took a look round I suppose a man low down as I was don't see very far, leastways Madagascar was clean out of sight, and any trace of land at all I saw a sail going south westward—looked like a schooner but her hull never came up Presently the sun got high in the sky and began to beat down upon me Lord! it pretty near made my brains boil I tried dipping my head in the sea, but after a while my eye fell on the Cape *Argus* and I lay down flat in the canoe and spread this over me Wonderful things these newspapers! I never read one through thoroughly before, but it's odd what you get up to when you're alone, as

pebbles hitting the boat at once, and a rush of water over my body I'd been dreaming of Antananarivo, and I sat up and halloaed to Intoshi to ask her what the devil was up and clawed out at the chair where the matches used to be Then I remembered where I was There were phosphorescent waves rolling up as if they meant to eat me, and all the rest of the night as black as pitch The air was simply yelling The clouds seemed down on your head almost, and the rain fell as if heaven was sinking and they were baling out the waters above the firmament One great roller came writhing at me, like a fiery serpent, and I bolted Then I thought of the canoe, and ran down to it as the water went hissing back again, but the thing had gone I wondered about the egg, then, and felt my way to it It was all right and well out of reach of the maddest waves, so I sat down beside it and cuddled it for company Lord! what a night that was!

"The storm was over before the morning There wasn't a rag of cloud left in the sky when the dawn came, and all along the beach there were bits of plank scattered—which was the disarticulated skeleton, so to speak, of my canoe However, that gave me something to do, for taking advantage of two of the trees being together, I rigged up a kind of storm shelter with these vestiges And that day the egg hatched

"Hatched, sir, when my head was pillowed on it and I was asleep I heard a whack and felt a jar and sat up, and there was the end of the egg pecked out and a rum little brown head looking out at me 'Lord!' I said, 'you're welcome', and with a little difficulty he came out

"He was a nice friendly little chap at first, about the size of a small hen—very much like most other young birds, only bigger His plumage was a dirty brown to begin with, with a sort of grey scab that fell off it very soon, and scarcely feathers—a kind of downy hair I can hardly express how pleased I was to see

him I tell you, Robinson Crusoe don't make near enough of his loneliness But here was interesting company He looked at me and winked his eye from the front backward, like a hen, and gave a chirp and began to peck about at once, as though being hatched three hundred years too late was just nothing 'Glad to see you, Man Friday!' says I, for I had naturally settled he was to be called Man Friday if ever he was hatched, as soon as ever I found the egg in the canoe had devel ped I was a bit anxious about his feed, so I gave l im a lump of raw parrot fish at once He took it, and opened his beak for more I was glad of that for, under the circumstances if he'd been at all fanciful, I should have had to eat him after all

"You'd be surprised what an interesting bird that Æpyornis chick was He followed me about from the very beginning He used to stand by me and watch while I fished in the lagoon, and go shares in anything I caught And he was sensible, too There were nasty green warty things, like pickled gherkins used to lie about on the beach, and he tried one of these and it upset him He never even looked at any of them again

"And he grew You could almost see h m grow And as I was never much of a society man, his quiet, friendly ways suited me to a T For nearly two years we were as happy as we could be on that island I had no business worries for I knew my salary was mounting up at Dawsons' We would see a sail now and then, but nothing ever came near us I amused myself, too, by decorating the island with designs worked in sea urchins and fancy shells of various kinds I put ÆPYORNIS ISLAND all around the place very nearly, in big letters like what you see done with coloured stones at railway stations in the old country, and mathematical calculations and drawings of various sorts And I used to lie watching the blessed bird stalking round and growing, growing, and think how I

could make a living out of him by showing him about if I ever got taken off After his first moult he began to get handsome, with a crest and a blue wattle, and a lot of green feathers at the behind of him And then I used to puzzle whether Dawsons' had any right to claim him or not Stormy weather and in the rainy season we lay snug under the shelter I had made out of the old canoe and I used to tell him lies about my friends at home And after a storm we would go round the island together to see if there was any drift It was a kind of idyll, you might say If only I had had some tobacco it would have been simply just like heaven

"It was about the end of the second year our little paradise went wrong Friday was then about fourteen feet high to the bill of him with a big, broad head like the end of a pickaxe, and two huge brown eyes with yellow rims, set together like a man's—not out of sight of each other like a hen's His plumage was fine—none of the half mourning style of your ostrich—more like a cassowary as far as colour and texture go And then it was he began to cock his comb at me and give himself airs, and show signs of a nasty temper

"At last came a time when my fishing had been rather unlucky, and he began to hang about me in a queer, meditative way I thought he might have been eating sea cucumbers or something, but it was really just discontent on his part I was hungry, too, and when at last I landed a fish I wanted it for myself Tempers were short that morning on both sides He pecked at it and grabbed it, and I gave him a whack on the head to make him leave go And at that he went for me Lord!

"He gave me this in the face" The man indicated his scar "Then he kicked me It was like a cart horse I got up, and, seeing he hadn't finished, I started off full tilt with my arms doubled up over my face But he ran on those gawky legs of his faster than

a race horse, and kept landing out at me w th sledge hammer kicks and bringing his pickaxe d wn on the back of my head I made for the lagoon and went in up to my neck He s opped at the water for he hate getting his feet wet, and began to make a s r ly something like a peacock's, only hoarser He starte strutting up and down the beach I ll admit I felt small to see this blessed fossil lording it there And my head and face were all bleeding, and—well, my body just one jelly of bruises

"I decided to swim across the lagoon and leave him alone for a bit, until the affair blew over I shinned up the tallest palm tree, and sat there thinking of it all I don't suppose I ever felt so hurt by anything before or since It was the brutal ingratitude of the creature I'd been more than a brother to him I d hatched him, educated him A great gawky, out-of date bird! And me a human being—heir of the ages and all that

"I thought after a time he d begin to see things in that light himself, and feel a little sorry for his behaviour I thought if I was to catch some nice little bits of fish, perhaps and go to him presently in a casual kind of way, and offer them to him he might do the sensible thing It took me some time to learn how un forgiving and cantankerous an extinct bird can be Malice!

"I won't tell you all the little devices I tried to get that bird round again I simply can t It makes my cheek burn with shame even now to think of the snubs and buffets I had from this infernal curiosity I tried violence I chucked lumps of coral at him from a safe distance but he only swallowed them I shied my open knife at him and almost lost it though it was too big for him to swallow I tried starving him out and struck fishing but he took to p cking along the beach at low water after worms and rubbed along on that Half my time I spent up to my neck in the lagoon, and the

rest up the palm trees One of them was scarcely high enough, and when he caught me up it he had a regular Bank Holiday with the calves of my legs It got un bearable I don t know if you have ever tried sleeping up a palm tree It gave me the most horrible night mares Think of the shame of it, too! Here was this extinct animal mooning about my island like a sulky duke, and me not allowed to rest the sole of my foot on the place I used to cry with weariness and vexation *I told him straight that I didn t mean to* be chased about a desert island by any damned anachro nisms I told him to go and peck a navigator of his own age But he only snapped his beak at me Great ugly bird all legs and neck!

"I shouldn't like to say how long that went on altogether I d have killed him sooner if I d known how However, I hit on a way of settling him at last It is a South American dodge I joined all my fishing lines together with stems of seaweed and things, and made a stoutish string, perhaps twelve yards in *length* or more, and I fastened two lumps of coral rock to the ends of this It took me some time to do, because *every now and then I had to go into the* lagoon or up a tree as the fancy took me This I whirled rapidly round my head, and then let it go at him The first time I missed, but the next time the string caught his legs beautifully, and wrapped round them again and again Over he went I threw it standing waist-deep in the lagoon, and as soon as he went down I was out of the water and sawing at his neck with my knife

"I don't like to think of that even now I felt like a murderer while I did it, though my anger was hot against him When I *stood over him and* saw him bleeding on the white sand, and his beautiful great legs and neck writhing in his last agony Pah!

"With that tragedy loneliness came upon me like a curse Good Lord! you can't imagine how I missed that bird I sat by his corpse and sorrowed over him.

and shivered as I looked round the desolate, silent reef I thought of what a jolly little bird he had been when he was hatched, and of a thousand pleasant tricks he had played before he went wrong I thought if I'd only wounded him I might have nursed him round into a better understanding If I'd had any means of digging into the coral rock I'd have buried him I felt exactly as if he was human As it was, I couldn't think of eating him, so I put him in the lagoon, and the little fishes picked him clean I didn't even save the feathers Then one day a chap cruising about in a yacht had a fancy to see if my atoll still existed

"He didn't come a moment too soon, for I was about sick enough of the desolation of it, and only hesitating whether I should walk out into the sea and finish up the business that way, or fall back on the green things . .

"I sold the bones to a man named Winslow—a dealer near the British Museum, and he says he sold them to old Havers It seems Havers didn't understand they were extra large, and it was only after his death they attracted attention They called 'em Æpyornis—what was it?"

"*Æpyornis vastus*," said I "It's funny, the very thing was mentioned to me by a friend of mine. When they found an Æpyornis with a thigh a yard long, they thought they had reached the top of the scale, and called him *Æpyornis maximus* Then someone turned up another thigh bone four feet six or more, and that they called *Æpyornis titan* Then your *vastus* was found after old Havers died, in his collection, and then a *vastissimus* turned up"

"Winslow was telling me as much," said the man with the scar "If they get any more Æpyornises he reckons some scientific swell will go and burst a blood-vessel But it was a queer thing to happen to a man; wasn't it—altogether!"

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"I don't like to think of that even now I felt like a murderer while I did it, though my anger was hot against him When I stood over him and saw him bleeding on the white sand, and his beautiful great legs and neck writhing in his last agony Pah!

"With that tragedy loneliness came upon me like a curse Good Lord! you can't imagine how I missed that bird I sat by his corpse and sorrowed over him

peals that I thought I heard some glass smash in the other room. I stopped writing and turned round to listen. For a moment I heard nothing; the hail was playing the devil's tattoo on the corrugated zinc of the roof. Then came another sound, a smash—no doubt of it this time. Something heavy had been knocked off the bench. I jumped up at once and went and opened the door leading into the big laboratory.

I was surprised to hear a queer sort of laugh, and saw Davidson standing unsteadily in the middle of the room with a dazzled look on his face. My first impression was that he was drunk. He did not notice

[illegible]

fingers spread out. "Great Scott!" he said. The thing happened three or four years ago, when everyone swore by that personage. Then he began raising his feet clumsily, as though he had expected to find them glued to the floor.

"Davidson!" cried I. "What's the matter with you?" He turned round in my direction and looked about for me. He looked over me and at me and on either side of me, without the slightest sign of seeing me. "Waves," he said; "and a remarkably neat schooner. I'd swear that was Bellows's voice. *Hullo!*" He shouted suddenly at the top of his voice.

I thought he was up to some foolery. Then I saw littered about his feet the shattered remains of the best of our electrometers. "What's up, man?" said I. "You've smashed the electrometer!"

"Bellows again!" said he. "Friends left, if my hands are gone. Something about electrometers. Which way *are* you, Bellows?" He suddenly came staggering towards me. "The damned stuff cuts like butter," he said. He walked straight into the bench and recoiled. "None so buttery that!" he said, and stood swaying.

I felt scared "Davidson," said I, "what on earth's come over you?"

He looked round him in every direction "I could swear that was Bellows Why don't you show yourself like a man, Bellows?"

It occurred to me that he must be suddenly struck blind I walked round the table and laid my hand upon his arm I never saw a man more startled in my life He jumped away from me, and came round into an attitude of self defence, his face fairly distorted with terror "Good God!" he cried "What was that"

"It's I—Bellows Confound it, Davidson!"

He jumped when I answered him and stared—how can I express it?—right through me He began talking, not to me but to himself "Here in broad daylight on a clear beach Not a place to hide in" He looked about him wildly "Here! I'm *off*" He suddenly turned and ran headlong into the big electromagnet—so violently that, as we found afterwards, he bruised his shoulder and jawbone cruelly At that he stepped back a pace, and cried out with almost a whimper "What, in Heaven's name, has come over me?" He stood, blanched with terror and trembling violently, with his right arm clutching his left, where that had collided with the magnet

By that time I was excited and fairly scared "Davidson," said I, "don't be afraid"

He was startled at my voice but not so excessively as before I repeated my words in as clear and as firm a tone as I could assume "Bellows," he said, "is that you?"

"Can't you see it's me?"

He laughed "I can't even see it's myself Where the devil are we?"

"Here," said I, "in the laboratory"

"The laboratory!" he answered in a puzzled tone, and put his hand to his forehead "I *was* in the

laboratory—till that flash came, but I'm hanged if I'm there now What ship is the- "

"There's no ship," said I "Do be sensible, old chap"

"No ship!" he repeated, and seemed to forget my denial forthwith "I suppose," said he slowly "we're both dead But the rummy part is I feel just as though I still had a body Don't get used to it all at once, I suppose The old ship was struck by lightning, I suppose Jolly quick thing, Bellows—eigh?"

"Don't talk nonsense You're very much alive You are in the laboratory, blundering about You've just smashed a new electrometer I don't envy you when Boyce arrives"

He stared away from me towards the diagrams of *cryohydrates* "*I must be deaf*," *said he* "*They've* fired a gun, for there goes the puff of smoke, and I never heard a sound"

I put my hand on his arm again, and this time he was less alarmed "We seem to have a sort of invisible bodies," said he "By Jove! there's a boat coming round the headland It's very much like the old life after all—in a different climate"

I shook his arm "Davidson" I cried, "wake up!"

It was just then that Boyce came in So soon as he spoke Davidson exclaimed 'Old Boyce! Dead too! What a lark!" I hastened to explain that Davidson was in a kind of somnambulistic trance Boyce was *interested at once We both did all we could to rouse* the fellow out of his extraordinary state He answered our questions, and asked us some of his own, but his attention seemed distracted by his hallucination about a beach and a ship He kept interpolating observations concerning some boat and the davits, and sails filling with the wind It made one feel queer, in the dusky laboratory, to hear him saying such things

He was blind and helpless We had to walk him down the passage, one at each elbow, to Boyce's private

The end was that he had to be taken down into his father's consulting room and laid upon a couch that stood there

He described the island as being a bleak kind of place on the whole, with very little vegetation, except some peaty stuff and a lot of bare rock There were multitudes of penguins, and they made the rocks white and disagreeable to see The sea was often rough, and once there was a thunderstorm, and he lay and shouted at the silent flashes Once or twice seals pulled up on the beach, but only on the first two or three days He said it was very funny the way in which the penguins used to waddle right through him, and how he seemed to lie among them without disturbing them

I remember one odd thing, and that was when he wanted very badly to smoke We put a pipe in his hands—he almost poked his eye out with it—and lit it But he couldn't taste anything I've since found it's the same with me—I don't know if it's the usual case—that I cannot enjoy tobacco at all unless I can see the smoke

But the queerest part of his vision came when Wade sent him out in a Bath chair to get fresh air The Davidsons hired a chair and got that deaf and obstinate dependant of theirs, Widgery, to attend to it. Widgery's ideas of healthy expeditions were peculiar My sister, who had been to the Dogs' Home, met them in Camden Town towards King's Cross, Widgery trotting along complacently, and Davidson evidently most distressed, trying in his feeble, blind way to attract Widgery's attention

He positively wept when my sister spoke to him "Oh, get me out of this horrible darkness!" he said, feeling for her hand "I must get out of it, or I shall die" He was quite incapable of explaining what was the matter, but my sister decided he must go home and presently, as they went uphill towards Hampstead, the horror seemed to drop from him. He

said it was good to see the stars again, though it was then about noon and a blazing day

"It seemed," he told me afterwards "as if I was being carried irresistibly towards the water I was not very much alarmed at first Of course it was night there—a lovely night"

"Of course?" I asked, for that struck me as odd

"Of course," said he "It's always night there when it is day here Well we went right into the water, which was calm and shining under the moonlight—just a broad swell that seemed to grow broader and flatter as I came down into it The surface glistened just like a skin—it might have been empty space underneath for all I could tell to the contrary Very slowly, for I rode slanting into it the water crept up to my eyes Then I went under and the skin seemed to break and heal again about my eyes The moon gave a jump up in the sky and grew green and dim and fish faintly glowing came darting round me—and things that seemed made of luminous glass, and I passed through a tangle of seaweeds that shone with an oily lustre And so I drove down into the sea, and the stars went out one by one and the moon grew greener and darker, and the seaweed became a luminous purple red It was all very faint and mysterious and everything seemed to quiver And all the while I could hear the wheels of the Bath-chair creaking, and the footsteps of people going by and a man in the distance selling the special *Pall Mall*

"I kept sinking down deeper and deeper into the water It became inky black about me, not a ray from above came down into that darkness, and the phosphorescent things grew brighter and brighter The snaky branches of the deeper weeds flickered like the flames of spirit lamps but, after a time, there were no more weeds The fishes came staring and gaping towards me, and into me and through me I never imagined such fishes before. They had lines of fire

found it out the more easily [illegible]
It's like a bit [illegible] when they were groping [illegible]
put your hand by [illegible]
see it [illegible] further [illegible] there [illegible]
lock [illegible]
[illegible]
upon the [illegible] of a [illegible] land [illegible]
To the dazzling [illegible] there's a [illegible]
beat a [illegible]

[illegible] that time Davidson began to mend. His [illegible] of the change, [illegible] his account of the recovery [illegible] is odd [illegible]. Over patches of his field of view, the phantom world grew fainter, grew transparent, as it were, and through these translucent gaps he began to see dimly the real world about him. The patches grew in size and number, ran together and spread until only here and there were blind spots left upon his eyes. He was able to get up and steer himself about, feed himself once more, read, smoke, and behave like an ordinary citizen again. At first it was very confusing to him to have these two pictures overlapping each other like the changing views of a lantern, but in a little while he began to distinguish the real from the illusory.

At first he was unfeignedly glad, and seemed only too anxious to complete his cure by taking exercise and tonics. But as that odd island of his began to fade away from him, he became queerly interested in it. He wanted particularly to go down into the deep sea again, and would spend half his time wandering about the low-lying parts of London, trying to find the water-logged wreck he had seen drifting. The glare of real daylight very soon impressed him so vividly as to blot out everything of his shadowy world, but of a night time, in a darkened room, he could still see the white-splashed rocks of the island, and the clumsy penguins staggering to and fro. But even these grew fainter and fainter, and, at last, soon after he married my sister, he saw them for the last time.

And now to tell of the queerest thing of all. About

two years after his cure I dined with the Davidsons and after dinner a man named Atkins called in He is a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and a pleasant, talkative man He was on friendly terms with my brother in law, and was soon on friendly terms with me It came out that he was engaged to Davidson's cousin, and incidentally he took out a kind of pocket photograph case to show us a new rendering of his *fiancée* "And, by the bye,' said he, "here's the old *Fulmar*'

Davidson looked at it casually Then suddenly his face lit up "Good heavens!' said he "I could almost swear——"

"What?" said Atkins

"That I had seen that ship before"

"Don't see how you can have She hasn't been out of the South Seas for six years and before then——"

"But, began Davidson, and then "Yes—that's the ship I dreamt of, I'm sure that's the ship I dreamt of She was standing off an island that swarmed with penguins and she fired a gun'

"Good Lord!' said Atkins, who had now heard the particulars of the seizure "How the deuce could you dream that?"

And then, bit by bit, it came out that on the very day Davidson was seized, H M S *Fulmar* had actually been off a little rock to the south of Antipodes Island A boat had landed overnight to get penguins' eggs, had been delayed and a thunderstorm drifting up, the boat's crew had waited until the morning before rejoining the ship Atkins had been one of them, and he corroborated, word for word the descriptions Davidson had given of the island and the boat There is not the slightest doubt in any of our minds that Davidson has really seen the place In some unaccountable way, while he moved hither and thither in London, his sight moved hither and thither in a manner that corresponded, about this distant island *How* is absolutely a mystery

That completes the remarkable story of Davidson's eyes. It's perhaps the best authenticated case in existence of real vision at a distance. Explanation there is none forthcoming except what Prof. Wade has thrown out. But his explanation involves the Fourth Dimension, and a dissertation on theoretical kinds of space. To talk of there being "a kink in space" seems mere nonsense to me; it may be because I am no mathematician. When I said that nothing would alter the fact that the place is eight thousand miles away, he answered that two points might be a yard away on a sheet of paper and yet be brought together by bending the paper round. The reader may grasp his argument, but I certainly do not. His idea seems to be that Davidson, stooping between the poles of the big electromagnet, had some extraordinary twist given to his retinal elements through the sudden change in the field of force due to the lightning.

He thinks, as a consequence of this, that it may be possible to live visually in one part of the world while one lives bodily in another. He has even made some experiments in support of his views; but so far he has simply succeeded in blinding a few dogs. I believe that is the net result of his work, though I have not seen him for some weeks. Latterly I have been so [illegible] on an altogether different footing, and I can testify personally to the accuracy of every detail I have given.

STORY THE TWELFTH

The Lord of the Dynamos

THE chief attendant of the three dynamos that buzzed and rattled at Camberwell and kept the electric railway going came out of Yorkshire and his name was James Holroyd He was a practical electrician but fond of whisky, a heavy, red haired brute with irregular teeth He doubted the existence of the Deity but accepted Carnot's cycle, and he had read Shakespeare and found him weak in chemistry His helper came out of the mysterious East, and his name was Azuma zi But Holroyd called him Pooh bah Holroyd liked a nigger help because he would stand kicking—a habit with Holroyd—and did not pry into the machinery and try to learn the ways of it Certain odd possibilities of the negro mind brought into abrupt contact with the crown of our civilisation Holroyd never fully realised, though just at the end he got some inkling of them

To define Azuma zi was beyond ethnology He was, perhaps, more negroid than anything else, though his

hair was curly rather than frizzy, and his nose had a bridge Moreover, his skin was brown rather than black, and the whites of his eyes were yellow His broad cheek bones and narrow chin gave his face something of the viperine V His head, too was broad *behind, and low and narrow at the forehead, as if his* brain had been twisted round in the reverse way to a European's He was short of stature and still shorter of English In conversation he made numerous odd noises of no known marketable value, and his infrequent words were carved and wrought into heraldic grotesqueness Holroyd tried to elucidate his religious beliefs, *and—especially after whisky—lectured to him against* superstition and missionaries Azuma zi, however, shirked the discussion of his gods, even though he was kicked for it

Azuma zi had come, clad in white but insufficient raiment, out of the stoke hole of the *Lord Clive*, from the Straits Settlements and beyond, into London He *had heard even in his youth of the greatness and riches* of London, where all the women are white and fair and even the beggars in the streets are white, and he had arrived, with newly earned gold coins in his pocket to worship at the shrine of civilisation The day of his landing was a dismal one, the sky was dun, and a wind worried drizzle filtered down to the greasy streets, *but he plunged boldly into the delights of Shadwell*, and was presently cast up shattered in health, civilised in costume, penniless, and, except in matters of the direst necessity, practically a dumb animal, to toil for James Holroyd, and to be bullied by him in the dynamo shed at Camberwell And to James Holroyd bullying was a labour of love

There were three dynamos with their engines a Camberwell The two that have been there since the beginning are small machines, the larger one was new The smaller machines made a reasonable noise, their straps hummed over the drums, every now and then the

brushes buzzed and fizzled, and the air churned steadily, whoo! whoo! whoo! between th ir poles One was loose in its foundations and kept the shed vibrating But the big dynamo drowned these little noises altogether with the sustained drone of its iron core, which somehow set part of the ironwork humming The place made the visitor's head reel with the throb, throb, throb of the engines the rotation of the big wheels, the spinning ball valves the occasional spittings of the steam, and over all the deep, unceasing, surging note of the big dynamo This last noise was from an engineering point of view a defect, but Azuma zi accounted it unto the monster for mightiness and pride

If it were possible we would have the noises of that shed always about the reader as he reads we would tell all our story to such an accompaniment It was a steady stream of din, from which the ear picked out first one thread and then another there was the intermittent snorting, panting, and seething of the steam engines, the suck and thud of their pistons, the dull beat on the air as the spokes of the great driving wheels came round, a note the leather straps made as they ran tighter and looser, and a fretful tumult from the dynamos, and, over all sometimes inaudible, as the ear tired of it, and then creeping back upon the senses again, was this trombone note of the big machine. The floor never felt steady and quiet beneath one s feet, but quivered and jarred It was a confusing, unsteady place, and enough to send anyone's thoughts jerking into odd zigzags And for three months, while the big strike of the engineers was in progress, Holroyd who was a blackleg, and Azuma zi who was a mere black, were never out of the stir and eddy of it, but slept and fed in the little wooden shanty between the shed and the gates

Holroyd delivered a theological lecture on the text of his big machine soon after Azuma zi came He had

to shout to be heard in the din "Look at that," said Holroyd, "where's your 'eathen idol to match 'im?" And Azuma-zi looked For a moment Holroyd was inaudible, and then Azuma-zi heard "Kill a hundred men Twelve per cent on the ordinary shares,' said Holroyd, "and that's something like a Gord"

Holroyd was proud of his big dynamo, and expatiated upon its size and power to Azuma-zi until heaven knows what odd currents of thought that and the incessant whirling and shindy set up within the curly black cranium He would explain in the most graphic manner the dozen or so ways in which a man might be killed by it, and once he gave Azuma-zi a shock as a sample of its quality After that, in the breathing times of his labour—it was heavy labour, being not only his own, but most of Holroyd's—Azuma-zi would sit and watch the big machine Now and then the brushes would sparkle and spit blue flashes, at which Holroyd would swear, but all the rest was as smooth and rhythmic as breathing The band ran shouting over the shaft, and ever behind one as one watched was the complacent thud of the piston So it lived all day in this big airy shed, with him and Holroyd to wait upon it, not prisoned up and slaving to drive a ship as the other engines he knew—mere captive devils of the British Solomon—had been, but a machine enthroned Those two smaller dynamos Azuma-zi by force of contrast despised, the large one he privately christened the Lord of the Dynamos They were fretful and irregular, but the big dynamo was steady How great it was! How serene and easy in its working! Greater and calmer even than the Buddhas he had seen at Rangoon, and yet not motionless, but living! The great black coils spun, spun, spun, the rings ran round under the brushes, and the deep note of its coil steadied the whole It affected Azuma-zi queerly

Azuma-zi was not fond of labour He would sit

about and watch the Lord of the Dynamos while Holroyd went away to persuade the yard porter to get whisky, although his proper place was not in the dynamo shed but behind the engines, and, moreover, if Holroyd caught him skulking he got hit for it with a rod of stout copper wire He would go and stand close to the colossus, and look up at the great leather band running overhead There was a black patch on the band that came round, and it pleased him somehow among all the clatter to watch this return again and again Odd thoughts spun with the whirl of it Scientific people tell us that savages give souls to rocks and trees—and a machine is a thousand times more alive than a rock or a tree And Azuma zi was practically a savage still, the veneer of civilisation lay no deeper than his slop suit, his bruises, and the coal grime on his face and hands His father before him had worshipped a meteoric stone kindred blood, it may be, had splashed the broad wheels of Juggernaut

He took every opportunity Holroyd gave him of touching and handling the great dynamo that was fascinating him He polished and cleaned it until the metal parts were blinding in the sun He felt a mysterious sense of service in doing this He would go up to it and touch its spinning coils gently The gods he had worshipped were all far away The people in London hid their gods

At last his dim feelings grew more distinct and took shape in thoughts, and at last in acts When he came into the roaring shed one morning he salaamed to the Lord of the Dynamos, and then, when Holroyd was away, he went and whispered to the thundering machine that he was its servant, and prayed it to have pity on him and save him from Holroyd As he did so a rare gleam of light came in through the open archway of the throbbing machine shed, and the Lord of the Dynamos, as he whirled and roared, was radiant with pale gold Then Azuma zi knew that his service was

acceptable to his Lord After that he did not feel so lonely as he had done, and he had indeed been very much alone in London Even when his work time was over, which was rare, he loitered about the shed

The next time Holroyd maltreated him Azuma zi went presently to the Lord of the Dynamos and whispered, "Thou seest, O my Lord!" and the angry whirr of the machinery seemed to answer him Thereafter it appeared to him that whenever Holroyd came into the shed a different note mingled with the sounds of the dynamo "My Lord bides his time" said Azuma zi to himself "The iniquity of the fool is not yet ripe" And he waited and watched for the reckoning One day there was evidence of short circuiting, and Holroyd, making an unwary examination—it was in the afternoon—got a rather severe shock Azuma zi from behind the engine saw him jump off and curse at the peccant coil

"He is warned," said Azuma zi to himself "Surely my Lord is very patient"

Holroyd had at first initiated his "nigger" into such elementary conceptions of the dynamo's working as would enable him to take temporary charge of the shed in his absence But when he noticed the manner in which Azuma-zi hung about the monster he became suspicious He dimly perceived his assistant was "up to something," and connecting him with the anointing of the coils with oil that had rotted the varnish in one place, he issued an edict, shouted above the confusion of the machinery, "Don't 'ee go nigh that big dynamo any more, Pooh bah, or a'll take thy skin off!" Besides, if it pleased Azuma zi to be near the big machine, it was plain sense and decency to keep him away from it

Azuma zi obeyed at the time, but later he was caught bowing before the Lord of the Dynamos At which Holroyd twisted his arm and kicked him as he turned to go away As Azuma zi presently stood behind the engine and glared at the back of the hated Holroyd,

the noises of the machinery took a new rhythm and sounded like four words in his native tongue

It is hard to say exactly what madness is I fancy Azuma zi was mad The incessant din and whirl of the dynamo shed may have churned up his little store of knowledge and big store of superstitious fancy, at last, into something akin to frenzy At any rate, when the idea of making Holroyd a sacrifice to the Dynamo Fetich was thus suggested to him, it filled him with a strange tumult of exultant emotion

That night the two men and their black shadows were alone in the shed together The shed was lit with one big arc light and winked and flickered purple The shadows lay black behind the dynamos, the ball governors of the engines whirled from light to darkness, and their pistons beat loud and steadily The world outside seen through the open end of the shed seemed incredibly dim and remote It seemed absolutely silent, too, since the riot of the machinery drowned every external sound Far away was the black fence of the yard with grey shadowy houses behind, and above was the deep blue sky and the pale little stars Azuma zi suddenly walked across the centre of the shed above which the leather bands were running, and went into the shadow by the big dynamo Holroyd heard a click, and the spin of the armature changed

"What are you dewin' with that switch?" he bawled in surprise "Han't I told you——"

Then he saw the set expression of Azuma-zi's eyes as the Asiatic came out of the shadow towards him

In another moment the two men were grappling fiercely in front of the great dynamo

"You coffee headed fool!" gasped Holroyd, with a brown hand at his throat "Keep off those contact rings" In another moment he was tripped and reeling back upon the Lord of the Dynamos He instinctively loosened his grip upon his antagonist to save himself from the machine

The messenger, sent in furious haste from the station to find out what had happened in the dynamo shed, met Azuma zi at the porter's lodge by the gate Azuma zi tried to explain something h the mes senger could make nothing of the bla k s incoherent English, and hurried on to the shed The machines were all noisily at work, and nothing seemed to be dis arranged There was, however a queer smell of singed hair Then he saw an odd looking crampled mass clinging [illegible] ing, rece [illegible]

The [illegible] saw the [illegible] on his heel before he opened them so that he should not see Holroyd again, and went out of the shed to get advice and help

When Azuma zi saw Holroyd die in the grip of the Great Dynamo he had been a little scared about the consequences of his act Yet he felt strangely elated, and knew that the favour of the Lord Dynamo was upon him His plan was already settled when he met the man coming from the station and the scientific manager who speedily arrived on the scene jumped at the obvious conclusion of suicide This expert scarcely noticed Azuma zi except to ask a few questions Did he see Holroyd kill himself? Azuma zi explained he had been out of sight at the engine furnace until he heard a difference in the noise from the dynamo It was not a difficult examination, being untinctured by suspicion

The distorted remains of Holroyd, which the elec trician removed from the machine, were hastily covered by the porter with a coffee stained tablecloth Some body, by a happy inspiration, fetched a medical man The expert was chiefly anxious to get the machine at work again, for seven or eight trains had stopped mid way in the stuffy tunnels of the electric railway Azuma zi, answering or misunderstanding the questions

of the people who had by authority or impudence come into the shed, was presently sent back to the stoke hole by the scientific manager Of course a crowd collected outside the gates of the yard—a crowd, for no known reason, always hovers for a day or two near the scene of a sudden death in London—two or three reporters percolated somehow into the engine shed, and one even got to Azuma zi but the scientific expert cleared them out again being himself an amateur journalist

Presently the body was carried away, and public interest departed with it Azuma zi remained very quietly at his furnace, seeing over and over again in the coals a figure that wriggled violently and became still An hour after the murder, to anyone coming into the shed things would have looked exactly as if nothing remarkable had ever happened there Peeping presently from his eng ne room the black saw the Lord Dynamo spin and whirl beside his little brothers, and the driving wheels were beating round and the steam in the pistons went thud, thud, exactly as it had been earlier in the evening After all, from the mechanical point of view it had been a most insignificant incident—the mere temporary deflection of a current. But now the slender form and slender shadow of the scientific manager replaced the sturdy outline of Holroyd travel ling up and down the lane of light upon the vibrating floor under the straps between the engines and the dynamos

"Have I not served my Lord?" said Azuma zi inaudibly from his shadow, and the note of the great dynamo rang out full and clear As he looked at the big whirling mechanism the strange fascination of it that had been a little in abeyance since Holroyd's death resumed its sway

Never had Azuma zi seen a man killed so swiftly and pitilessly The big humming machine had slain its victim without wavering for a second from its steady beating It was indeed a mighty god

The unconscious scientific manager stood with his back to him, scribbling on a piece of paper His shadow lay at the foot of the monster

Was the Lord Dynamo still hungry? His servant was ready

Azuma zi made a stealthy step forward then stopped The scientific manager suddenly ceased his writing, walked down the shed to the endmost of the dynamos, and began to examine the brushes

Azuma zi hesitated, and then slipped across noiselessly *into the shadow by the switch There he waited* Presently the manager's footsteps could be heard returning He stopped in his old position unconscious of the stoker crouching ten feet away from him Then the big dynamo suddenly fizzled, and in another moment Azuma zi had sprung out of the darkness upon him

The scientific manager was gripped round the body and swung towards the big dynamo Kicking with his knee and forcing his antagonist's head down with his hands, he loosened the grip on his waist and swung *round away from* the machine Then *the black* grasped him again, putting a curly head against his chest, and they swayed and panted as it seemed for an age or so Then the scientific manager was impelled to catch a black ear in his teeth and bite furiously The black yelled hideously

They rolled over on the floor, and the black, who had apparently slipped from the vice of the teeth or parted with some ear—the scientific manager wondered which at the time—tried to throttle him The scientific manager was making some ineffectual efforts to claw *something* with his hands and to kick, when the welcome sound of quick footsteps sounded on the floor The next moment Azuma zi had left him and darted towards the big dynamo There was a splutter amid the roar

The officer of the company who had entered stood

staring as Azuma zi caught the naked terminals in his hands, gave one horrible convulsion, and then hung motionless from the machine, his face violently distorted

"I m jolly glad you came in when you did," said the scientific manager, still sitting on the floor

He looked at the still quivering figure "It is not a nice death to die, apparently—but it is quick"

The official was still staring at the body He was a man of slow apprehension

There was a pause

The scientific manager got up on his feet rather awkwardly He ran his fingers along his collar thoughtfully, and moved his head to and fro several times

"Poor Holroyd! I see now" Then almost mechanically he went towards the switch in the shadow and turned the current into the railway circuit again As he d d so the singed body loosened its grip upon the machine and fell forward on its face The core of the dynamo roared out loud and clear, and the armature beat the air

So ended prematurely the worship of the Dynamo Deity, perhaps the most short lived of all religions Yet withal it could at least boast a Martyrdom and a Human Sacrifice.



STORY THE THIRTEENTH

The Hammerpond Park Burglary

It is a moot point whether burglary is to be considered as a sport, a trade, or an art For a trade, the technique is scarcely rigid enough, and its claims to be considered an art are vitiated by the mercenary element that qualifies its triumphs On the whole it seems to be most justly ranked as sport, a sport for which no rules are at present formulated, and of which the prizes are distributed in an extremely informal manner It was this informality of burglary that led to the regrettable extinction of two promising beginners at Hammerpond Park

The stakes offered in this affair consisted chiefly of diamonds and other personal *bric à brac* belonging to the newly married Lady Aveling Lady Aveling, as the reader will remember, was the only daughter of Mrs Montague Pangs, the well known hostess Her marriage to Lord Aveling was extensively advertised in the papers, the quantity and quality of her wedding presents, and the fact that the honeymoon was to be spent at Hammerpond The announcement of these

valuable prizes created a considerable sensation in the small circle in which Mr Teddy Watkins was the undisputed leader, and it was decided that, accompanied by a duly qualified assistant, he should visit the village of Hammerpond in his professional capacity

Being a man of naturally retiring and modest disposition Mr Watkins determined to make this visit *incog* and after due consideration of the conditions of his enterprise, he selected the rôle of a landscape artist and the unassuming surname of Smith He preceded his assistant, who it was decided, should join him only on the last afternoon of his stay at Hammerpond Now the village of Hammerpond is perhaps one of the prettiest little corners in Sussex, many thatched houses still survive, the flint built church with its tall spire nestling under the down is one of the finest and least restored in the county, and the beech woods and bracken jungles through which the road runs to the great house are singularly rich in what the vulgar artist and photographer call "bits" So that Mr Watkins, on his *arrival with two virgin canvases, a brand new easel*, a paint box, portmanteau, an ingenious little ladder made in sections (after the pattern of the late lamented master Charles Peace), crowbar, and wire coils, found himself welcomed with effusion and some curiosity by half a dozen other brethren of the brush It rendered the disguise he had chosen unexpectedly plausible, but it inflicted upon him a considerable amount of æsthetic conversation for which he was very imperfectly prepared

"Have you exhibited very much?" said Young Porson in the bar parlour of the "Coach and Horses," where Mr Watkins was skilfully accumulating local information on the night of his arrival

"Very little," said Mr Watkins, "just a snack here and there"

"Academy?"

"In course *And* at the Crystal Palace"

"Did they hang you well?" said Porson

"Don't rot," said Mr Watkins "I don't like it"

"I mean did they put you in a good place?"

"Whadyer mean?" said Mr Watkins suspiciously "One 'ud think you were trying to make out I'd been put away"

Porson had been brought up by aunts and was a gentlemanly young man even for an artist he did not know what being "put away" meant but he thought it best to explain that he intended nothing of the sort As the question of hanging seemed a sore point with Mr Watkins, he tried to divert the conversation a little

"Do you do figure work at all?"

"No, never had a head for figures," said Mr Watkins, "my miss—Mrs Smith, I mean, does all that"

"She paints too!" said Porson "That's rather jolly"

"Very," said Mr Watkins though he really did not think so, and, feeling the conversation was drifting a little beyond his grasp added, "I came down here to paint Hammerpond House by moonlight"

"Really!" said Porson "That's rather a novel idea"

"Yes" said Mr Watkins, "I thought it rather a good notion when it occurred to me I expect to begin to-morrow night"

"What! You don't mean to paint in the open by night"

"I do though"

"But how will you see your canvas?"

"Have a bloomin' cop's—" began Mr Watkins rising too quickly to the question and then realising this bawled to Miss Durgan for another glass of beer "I'm goin' to have a thing called a dark lantern," he said to Porson

"But it's about new moon now," objected Porson "There won't be any moon"

"There'll be the house," said Watkins, "at any rate I'm goin', you see, to paint the house first and the moon afterwards"

Oh! said Porson, too staggered to continue the conversation

"They doo say," said old Durgan, the landlord, who had maintained a respectful silence during the technical conversation, "as there's no less than three p'licemen from Azelworth on dewty every night in the house—count of this Lady Aveling 'n her jewellery One'm won fower and six last night off second footman—tossin'"

Towards sunset next day Mr Watkins virgin canvas easel and a very considerable case of other appliances in hand, strolled up the pleasant pathway through the beech woods to Hammerpond Park, and pitched his apparatus in a strategic position commanding the house Here he was observed by Mr Raphael Sant, who was returning across the park from a study of the chalk pits His curiosity having been fired by Porson's account of the new arrival he turned aside with the idea of discussing nocturnal art

Mr Watkins was apparently unaware of his approach. A friendly conversation with Lady Hammerpond's butler had just terminated, and that individual, surrounded by the three pet dogs which it was his duty to take for an airing after dinner had been served was receding in the distance Mr Watkins was mixing colour with an air of great industry Sant, approaching more nearly, was surprised to see the colour in question was as harsh and brilliant an emerald green as it is possible to imagine Having cultivated an extreme sensibility to colour from his earliest years, he drew the air in sharply between his teeth at the very first glimpse of this brew Mr Watkins turned round He looked annoyed

"What on earth are you going to do with that *beastly* green?" said Sant

Mr Watkins realised that his zeal to appear busy in

the eyes of the butler had evidently betrayed him into some technical error He looked at Sant and h tated

"Pardon my rudeness," said Sant but rea that green is altogether too amazing It came as a shock What *do* you mean to do with it?"

Mr Watkins was collecting his resources N th n could save the situation but decision "If you come here interrupting my work," he said, "I m a goin to paint your face with it."

Sant retired, for he was a humorist and a peaceful man Going down the hill he met Porson and Wainwright "Either that man is a genius or he is a dangerous lunatic," said he "Just go up and look at his green" And he continued his way, his countenance brightened by a pleasant anticipation of a cheerful affray round an easel in the gloaming, and the shedding of much green paint

But to Porson and Wainwright Mr Watkins was less aggressive, and explained that the green was intended to be the first coating of his picture It was, he admitted in response to a remark an absolutely new method, invented by himself But subsequently he became more reticent, he explained he was not going to tell every passer by the secret of his own particular style, and added some scathing remarks upon the meanness of people "hanging about" to pick up such tricks of the masters as they could, which immediately relieved him of their company

Twilight deepened, first one then another star appeared The rooks amid the tall trees to the left of the house had long since lapsed into slumbrous silence the house itself lost all the details of its architecture and became a dark grey outline and then the windows of the salon shone out brilliantly, the conservatory was lighted up, and here and there a bedroom window burnt yellow Had anyone approached the easel in the park it would have been found deserted One brief uncivil word in brilliant green sullied the purity of its

No one answered this remark Yet he failed to see how it applied to him

"He's fair dazed, said a strange voice, "the villains half murdered him"

Mr Teddy Watkins decided to remain fair dazed until he had a better grasp of the situation He perceived that two of the black figures round him stood side by side with a dejected air, and there was something in the carriage of their shoulders that suggested to his experienced eye hands that were bound together Two! In a flash he rose to his position He emptied the little flask and staggered—obsequious hands assisting him—to his feet There was a sympathetic murmur

"Shake hands, sir, shake hands," said one of the figures near him "Permit me to introduce myself I am very greatly indebted to you It was the jewels of my wife, Lady Aveling, which attracted these scoundrels to the house"

"Very glad to make your lordship's acquaintance," said Teddy Watkins

"I presume you saw the rascals making for the shrubbery, and dropped down on them?"

"That's exactly how it happened," said Mr Watkins

"You should have waited till they got in at the window," said Lord Aveling "they would get it hotter if they had actually committed the burglary And it was lucky for you two of the policemen were out by the gates and followed up the three of you I doubt if you could have secured the two of them—though it [illegible] [illegible]e"

[illegible]" said Mr [illegible]

[illegible] am afraid [illegible] The party was now moving towards the house "You walk rather lame May I offer you my arm?"

And instead of entering Hammerpond House by the dressing room window, Mr Watkins entered it—slightly

intoxicated, and inclined now to cheerfulness again—on the arm of a real live peer, and by the front door. "This," thought Mr. Watkins, "is burgling in style!" The "scoundrels," seen by the gaslight, proved to be mere local amateurs unknown to Mr. Watkins, and they were taken down into the pantry and there watched over by the three policemen, two gamekeepers with loaded guns, the butler, an ostler, and a carman, until the dawn allowed of their removal to Hazelhurst police station. Mr. Watkins was made much of in the saloon. They devoted a sofa to him, and would not hear of a return to the village that night. Lady Aveling was sure he was brilliantly original, and said her idea of Turner was just such another rough, half-inebriated, deep-eyed, brave, and clever man. Someone brought up a remarkable little folding ladder that had been picked up in the shrubbery, and showed him how it was put together. They also described how wires had been found in the shrubbery, evidently placed there to trip up unwary pursuers. It was lucky he had escaped these snares. And they showed him the jewels.

Mr. Watkins had the sense not to talk too much, and in any conversational difficulty fell back on his internal pains. At last he was seized with stiffness in the back, and yawning. Everyone suddenly awoke to the fact that it was a shame to keep him talking after his affray, so he retired early to his room, the little red room next to Lord Aveling's suite.

* * * * *

The dawn found a deserted easel bearing a canvas with a green inscription, in the Hammerpond Park, and it found Hammerpond House in commotion. But if the dawn found Mr. Teddy Watkins and the Aveling diamonds, it did not communicate the information to the police.

STORY THE FOURTEENTH

The Moth

PROBABLY you have heard of Hapley—not W 1 Hapley, the son, but the celebrated Hapley, the Hapley of *Periplaneta Hapliia* Hapley the entomologist

If so you know at least of the great feud between Hapley and Professor Pawkins, though certain of its consequences may be new to you For those who have not, a word or two of explanation is necessary, which the idle reader may go over with a glancing eye *if his* indolence so incline him

It is amazing how very widely diffused is the ignorance of such really important matters as this Hapley Pawkins feud Those epoch mak ng controversies, again, that have convulsed the Geological Society are, *I verily* believe, almost entirely unknown outside the fellowship of that body I have heard men of fair general educa tion even refer to the great scenes at these meetings as vestry meeting sq abbles Yet the great hate of the Engl sh and Scotch geologists has lasted now *half a* century, and has "left deep and abundant marks upon the body of the science" And this Hapley Pawkins business, though perhaps a more personal affair, stirred

passions as profound, if not profounder. Your common man has no conception of the zeal that animates a scientific investigator, the fury of contradiction you can arouse in him. It is the *odium theologicum* in a new form. There are men, for instance, who would gladly burn Sir Ray Lankester at Smithfield for his treatment of the Mollusca in the Encyclopædia. That fantastic extension of the Cephalopods to cover the Pteropods. . . . But I wander from Hapley and Pawkins.

It began years and years ago with a revision of the Microlepidoptera (whatever these may be) by Pawkins, in which he extinguished a new species created by Hapley. Hapley, who was always quarrelsome, replied by a stinging impeachment of the entire classification of Pawkins.* Pawkins in his "Rejoinder"† suggested that Hapley's microscope was as defective as his power of observation, and called him an "irresponsible meddler"—Hapley was not a professor at that time. Hapley in his retort,‡ spoke of "blundering collectors," and described, as if inadvertently, Pawkins's revision as a "miracle of ineptitude." It was war to the knife. However, it would scarcely interest the reader to detail how these two great men quarrelled, and how the split between them widened until from the Microlepidoptera they were at war upon every open question in entomology. There were memorable occasions. At times the Royal Entomological Society meetings resembled nothing so much as the Chamber of Deputies. On the whole, I fancy Pawkins was nearer the truth than Hapley. But Hapley was skilful with his rhetoric, had a turn for ridicule rare in a scientific man, was endowed with vast energy, and had a fine sense of injury in the matter of the extinguished species; while Pawkins was a man of dull presence, prosy of speech, in shape

* "Remarks on a Recent Revision of Microlepidoptera," *Quart. Journ. Entomological Soc.*, 1863.

† "Rejoinder to Certain Remarks," etc. *Ibid.* 1864.

‡ "Further Remarks," etc. *Ibid.*

not unlike a water barrel, over-conscientious with testimonials, and suspected of jobbing museum appointments So the young men gathered round Hapley and applauded him It was a long struggle, vicious from the beginning and growing at last to pitiless antagonism The successive turns of fortune, now an advantage to one side and now to another—now Hapley tormented by some success of Pawkins, and now Pawkins outshone by Hapley belong rather to the history of entomology than to this story

But in 1891 Pawkins, whose health had been bad for some time published some work upon the "mesoblast" of the Death's Head Moth What the mesoblast of the Death's Head Moth may be does not matter a rap in this story But the work was far below his usual standard, and gave Hapley an opening he had coveted for years He must have worked night and day to make the most of his advantage

In an elaborate critique he rent Pawkins to tatters—one can fancy the man's disordered black hair, and his queer dark eyes flashing as he went for his antagonist—and Pawkins made a reply, halting, ineffectual, with painful gaps of silence, and yet malignant There was no mistaking his will to wound Hapley, nor his incapacity to do it But few of those who heard him—I was absent from that meeting—realised how ill the man was

Hapley got his opponent down, and meant to finish him He followed with a brutal attack upon Pawkins, in the form of a paper upon the development of moths in general, a paper showing evidence of an extraordinary amount of labour, couched in a violently controversial tone Violent as it was an editorial note witnesses that it was modified It must have covered Pawkins with shame and confusion of face It left no loophole, it was murderous in argument, and utterly contemptuous in tone, an awful thing for the declining years of a man's career

The world of entomologists waited breathlessly for the rejoinder from Pawkins He would try one for Pawkins had always been game But when it came it surprised them For the rejoinder of Pawkins was to catch influenza, proceed to pneumonia, and die

It was perhaps as effectual a reply as he could make under the circumstances, and largely turned the current of feeling against Hapley The very people who had most gleefully cheered on those gladiators became serious at the consequence There could be no reasonable doubt the fret of the defeat had contributed to the death of Pawkins There was a limit even to scientific controversy, said serious people Another crushing attack was already in the press and appeared on the day before the funeral I don't think Hapley exerted himself to stop it People remembered how Hapley had hounded down his rival and forgot that rival's defects Scathing satire reads ill over fresh mould The thing provoked comment in the daily papers It was that made me think you had probably heard of Hapley and this controversy But, as I have already remarked, scientific workers live very much in a world of their own, half the people, I dare say, who go along Piccadilly to the Academy every year could not tell you where the learned societies abide Many even think that research is a kind of happy family cage in which all kinds of men lie down together in peace

In his private thoughts Hapley could not forgive Pawkins for dying In the first place, it was a mean dodge to escape the absolute pulverisation Hapley had in hand for him, and in the second, it left Hapley's mind with a queer gap in it For twenty years he had worked hard, sometimes far into the night, and seven days a week, with microscope, scalpel, collecting-net, and pen, and almost entirely with reference to Pawkins The European reputation he had won had come as an incident in that great antipathy He had gradually worked up to a climax in this last controversy

would have maddened Pawkins more . . . And Pawkins was dead!

Something about the head and body of the insect became singularly suggestive of Pawkins, just as the chess king had been

"Confound Pawkins!" said Hapley "But I must catch this" And looking round him for some means of capturing the moth he rose slowly out of his chair Suddenly the insect rose, struck the edge of the lamp sh de—Hapley heard the "ping"—and vanished into the shadow

In a moment Hapley had whipped off the shade, so that the whole room was illuminated The thing had disappeared but soon his practised eye detected it upon the wall paper near the door He went towards it poising the lamp-shade for capture Before he was within striking distance, however, it had risen and was fluttering round the room After the fashion of its kind, it flew with sudden starts and turns, seeming to vanish here and reappear there Once Hapley struck, and missed then again

The third time he hit his microscope The instrument swayed, struck and overturned the lamp, and fell noisily upon the floor The lamp turned over on the table and, very luckily, went out Hapley was left in the dark With a start he felt the strange moth blunder into his face

It was maddening He had no lights If he opened the door of the room the thing would get away In the darkness he saw Pawkins quite distinctly laughing at him Pawkins had ever an oily laugh He swore furiously and stamped his foot on the floor

There was a timid rapping at the door

Then it opened, perhaps a foot, and very slowly The alarmed face of the landlady appeared behind a pink candle flame she wore a nightcap over her grey

hair and had some purple garment over her shoulders "What *was* that fearful smash?" she said. "Has anything——" The strange moth appeared fluttering about the chink of the door. "Shut that door!" said Hapley, and suddenly rushed at her.

The door slammed hastily. Hapley was left alone in the dark. Then in the pause he heard his landlady scuttle upstairs, lock her door, and drag something heavy across the room and put against it.

It became evident to Hapley that his conduct and appearance had been strange and alarming. Confound the moth! and Pawkins! However, it was a pity to lose the moth now. He felt his way into the hall and found the matches, after sending his hat down upon the floor with a noise like a drum. With the lighted candle he returned to the sitting room. No moth was to be seen. Yet once for a moment it seemed that the thing was fluttering round his head. Hapley very suddenly decided to give up the moth and go to bed. But he was excited. All night long his sleep was broken by dreams of the moth, Pawkins, and his landlady. Twice in the night he turned out and soused his head in cold water.

One thing was very clear to him. His landlady could not possibly understand about the strange moth, especially as he had failed to catch it. No one but an entomologist would understand quite how he felt. She was probably frightened at his behaviour, and yet he failed to see how he could explain it. He decided to say nothing further about the events of last night. After breakfast he saw her in her garden, and decided to go out and talk to reassure her. He talked to her about beans and potatoes, bees, caterpillars, and the price of fruit. She replied in her usual manner, but she looked at him a little suspiciously, and kept walking as he walked, so that there was always a bed of flowers, or a row of beans, or something of the sort,

between them. After a while he began to feel singularly irritated at this, and to conceal his vexation, went indoors and presently went out for a walk.

The moth or butterfly, trailing an odd flavour of Pawkins with it, kept coming into that walk though he did his best to keep his mind off it. Once he saw it quite distinctly, with its wings flattened out, upon the old stone wall that runs along the west edge of the park, but going up to it he found it was only two lumps of grey and yellow lichen. "This," said Hapley, "is the reverse of mimicry. Instead of a butterfly looking like a stone, here is a stone looking like a butterfly!" Once something hovered and fluttered round his head, but by an effort of will he drove that impression out of his mind again.

In the afternoon Hapley called upon the Vicar, and argued with him upon theological questions. They sat in the little arbour covered with brier, and smoked as they wrangled. "Look at that moth!" said Hapley, suddenly, pointing to the edge of the wooden table.

"Where?" said the Vicar.

"You don't see a moth on the edge of the table there?" said Hapley.

"Certainly not," said the Vicar.

Hapley was thunderstruck. He gasped. The Vicar was staring at him. Clearly the man saw nothing. "The eye of faith is no better than the eye of science," said Hapley awkwardly.

"I don't see your point," said the Vicar, thinking it was part of the argument.

That night Hapley found the moth crawling over his counterpane. He sat on the edge of the bed in his shirt sleeves and reasoned with himself. Was it pure hallucination? He knew he was slipping, and he battled for his sanity with the same silent energy he had formerly displayed against Pawkins. So persistent is mental habit that he felt as if it were still a struggle with Pawkins. He was well versed in psychology

He knew that such visual illusions do come as a result of mental strain But the point was he had not only *see* the moth, he had heard it when it touched the edge of the lamp-shade and afterwards when it hit against the wall, and he had felt it strike his face in the dark

He looked at it It was not at all dream like but perfectly clear and solid looking in the candle light He saw the hairy body and the short feathery antennæ the jointed legs even a place where the down was rubbed from the wing He suddenly felt angry with himself for being afraid of a little insect

His landlady had got the servant to sleep with her that night, because she was afraid to be alone In addition she had locked the door and put the chest of drawers against it They listened and talked in whispers after they had gone to bed but nothing occurred to alarm them About eleven they had ventured to put the candle out and had both dozed off to sleep They woke with a start, and sat up in bed, listening in the darkness

Then they heard slippered feet going to and fro in Hapley's room A chair was overturned and there was a violent dab at the wall Then a china mantel ornament smashed upon the fender Suddenly the door of the room opened, and they heard him upon the landing They clung to one another, listening He seemed to be dancing upon the staircase Now he would go down three or four steps quickly, then up again, then hurry down into the hall They heard the umbrella stand go over, and the fanlight break Then the bolt shot and the chain rattled He was opening the door

They hurried to the window It was a dim grey night an almost unbroken sheet of watery cloud was sweeping across the moon and the hedge and trees in front of the house were black against the pale road way They saw Hapley, looking like a ghost in his

shirt and white trousers, running to and fro in the road and beating the air. Now he would stop, now he would dart very rapidly at something invisible, now he would move upon it with stealthy strides. At last he went out of sight up the road towards the down. Then while they argued who should go down and lock the door, he returned. He was walking very fast, and he came straight into the house, closed the door carefully and went quietly up to his bedroom. Then everything was silent.

"Mrs. Colville," said Hapley, calling down the staircase next morning, "I hope I did not alarm you last night."

"You may well ask that!" said Mrs. Colville.

"The fact is, I am a sleep walker, and the last two nights I have been without my sleeping mixture. There is nothing to be alarmed about, really. I am sorry I made such an ass of myself. I will go over the down to Shoreham, and get some stuff to make me sleep soundly. I ought to have done that yesterday."

But half way over the down, by the chalk pits, the moth came upon Hapley again. He went on, trying to keep his mind upon chess problems, but it was no good. The thing fluttered into his face, and he struck at it with his hat in self-defence. Then rage, the old rage—the rage he had so often felt against Pawkins—came upon him again. He went on, leaping and striking at the eddying insect. Suddenly he trod on nothing and fell headlong.

There was a gap in his sensations, and Hapley found himself sitting on the heap of flints in front of the opening of the chalk pits, with a leg twisted back under him. The strange moth was still fluttering round his head. He struck at it with his hand, and turning his head saw two men approaching him. One was the village doctor. It occurred to Hapley that this was lucky. Then it came into his mind with

extraordinary vividness, that no one would ever be able to see the strange moth except himself and that it behooved him to keep silent about it

Late that night, however, after his broken leg was set, he was feverish and forgot his self-restraint He was lying flat on his bed, and he began to run his eyes round the room to see if the moth was still about He tried not to do this, but it was no good He soon caught sight of the thing resting close to his hand by the night light, on the green tablecloth The wings quivered With a sudden wave of anger he smote at it with his fist, and the nurse woke up with a shriek He had missed it

"That moth!" he said, and then "It was fancy Nothing!"

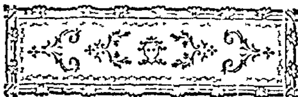
All the time he could see quite clearly the insect going round the cornice and darting across the room and he could also see that the nurse saw nothing of it and looked at him strangely He must keep himself in hand He knew he was a lost man if he did not keep himself in hand But as the night waned the fever grew upon him and the very dread he had of seeing the moth made him see it About five, just as the dawn was grey, he tried to get out of bed and catch it, though his leg was afire with pain The nurse had to struggle with him

On account of this they tied him down to the bed At this the moth grew bolder and once he felt it settle in his hair Then because he struck out violently with his arms they tied these also At this the moth came and crawled over his face and Hapley wept swore screamed prayed for them to take it off him unavailingly

The doctor was a blockhead a just-qualified general practitioner and quite ignorant of mental science He simply said there was no moth Had he possessed the wit he might still perhaps have saved Hapley from his fate by entering into his delusion, and covering his

face with gauze as he prayed might be done But, as I say, the doctor was a blockhead and until the leg was healed Hapley was kept tied to his bed, with the imaginary moth crawling over him It never left him while he was awake and it grew to a monster in his dreams While he was awake he longed for sleep, and from sleep he awoke screaming

So now Hapley is spending the remainder of his days in a padded room worried by a moth that no one else can see The asylum doctor calls it hallucination but Hapley, when he is in his easier mood and can talk says it is the ghost of Pawkins and consequently a unique specimen and well worth the trouble of catching



STORY THE FIFTEENTH

The Treasure in the Forest

THE canoe was now approaching the land The bay opened out, and a gap in the white surf of the reef marked where the little river ran out to the sea, the thicker and deeper green of the virgin forest showed its course down the distant hill slope The forest here came close to the beach Far beyond, dim and almost cloudlike in texture, rose the mountains, like suddenly frozen waves The sea was still save for an almost imperceptible swell The sky blazed

The man with the carved paddle stopped "It should be somewhere here," he said He shipped the paddle and held his arms out straight before him

The other man had been in the fore part of the canoe, closely scrutinising the land He had a sheet of yellow paper on his knee

"Come and look at this, Evans," he said

Both men spoke in low tones, and their lips were hard and dry

The man called Evans came swaying along the canoe *until he could look over his companion's shoulder*

The paper had the appearance of a rough map By much folding it was creased and worn to the pitch of separation, and the second man held the discoloured fragments together where they had parted On it one could dimly make out, in almost obliterated pencil, the outline of the bay

"Here," said Evans, "is the reef and here is the gap" He ran his thumb nail over the chart

"This curved and twisting line is the river—I could do with a drink now!—and this star is the place"

"You see this dotted line," said the man with the map, "it is a straight line, and runs from the opening of the reef to a clump of palm trees The star comes just where it cuts the river We must mark the place as we go into the lagoon"

"It's queer," said Evans, after a pause, "what these little marks down here are for It looks like the plan of a house or something, but what all these little dashes, pointing this way and that, may mean I can't get a notion *And what's the writing?*"

"Chinese," said the man with the map

"Of course! *He* was a Chinee," said Evans

"They all were," said the man with the map

They both sat for some minutes staring at the land, while the canoe drifted slowly Then Evans looked towards the paddle

"Your turn with the paddle now, Hooker," said he

And his companion quietly folded up his map, put it in his pocket, passed Evans carefully, and began to paddle His movements were languid, like those of a man whose strength was nearly exhausted

Evans sat with his eyes half closed, watching the frothy breakwater of the coral creep nearer and nearer The sky was like a furnace now, for the sun was near the zenith Though they were so near the Treasure he did not feel the exaltation he had anticipated The intense excitement of the struggle for the plan, and the long night voyage from the mainland in the un-

provisioned canoe had, to use his own expression, "taken it out of him" He tried to arouse himself by directing his mind to the ingots the Chinamen had spoken of, but it would not rest there it came back headlong to the thought of sweet water rippling in the river, and to the almost unendurable dryness of his lips and throat The rhythmic wash of the sea upon the reef was becoming audible now, and it had a pleasant sound in his ears the water washed along the side of the canoe, and the paddle dripped between each stroke Presently he began to doze

He was still dimly conscious of the island but a queer dream texture interwove with his sensations Once again it was the night when he and Hooker had hit upon the Chinamen's secret, he saw the moonlit trees, the little fire burning and the black figures of the three Chinamen—silvered on one side by moon light, and on the other glowing from the firelight—and heard them talking together in pigeon English—for they came from different provinces Hooker had caught the drift of their talk first and had motioned to him to listen Fragments of the conversation were inaudible and fragments incomprehensible A Spanish galleon from the Philippines hopelessly aground, and its treasure buried against the day of return, lay in the background of the story, a shipwrecked crew thinned by disease, a quarrel or so, and the needs of discipline, and at last taking to their boats never to be heard of again Then Chang hi, only a year since wandering ashore, had happened upon the ingots hidden for two hundred years, had deserted his junk, and reburied them with infinite toil, single handed but very safe He laid great stress on the safety—it was a secret of his Now he wanted help to return and exhume them Presently the little map fluttered and the voices sank A fine story for two stranded British wastrels to hear! Evans' dream shifted to the moment when he had Chang hi's pigtail in his hand The life of a China

man is scarcely sacred like a European's The cunning little face of Chang-hi, first keen and furious like a startled snake, and then fearful, treacherous and pitiful, became [illegible] At the end [illegible] ible and star [illegible] un-pleasant, [illegible] ang-hi gibbered and threatened him He saw in his dream heaps and heaps of gold, and Chang-hi intervening and struggling to hold him back from it He took Chang-hi by the pigtail—how big the yellow brute was, and how he struggled and grinned! He kept growing bigger, too Then the bright heaps of gold turned to a roaring furnace, and a vast devil, surprisingly like Chang-hi, but with a huge black tail, began to feed him with coals They burnt his mouth horribly Another devil was shouting his name "Evans, Evans, you sleepy fool!"—or was it Hooker?

He woke up They were in the mouth of the lagoon

"There are the three palm-trees It must be in a line with that clump of bushes," said his companion "Mark that If we go to those bushes and then strike into the bush in a straight line from here, we shall come to it when we come to the stream"

They could see now where the mouth of the stream opened out At the sight of it Evans revived "Hurry up, man," he said, "Or by heaven I shall have to drink sea water!" He gnawed his hand and stared at the gleam of silver among the rocks and green tangle

Presently he turned almost fiercely upon Hooker. "Give *me* the paddle," he said

So they reached the river mouth A little way up Hooker took some water in the hollow of his hand, tasted it, and spat it out A little further he tried again "This will do," he said, and they began drinking eagerly

"Curse this!" said Evans, suddenly "It's too

slow" And, leaning dangerously over the fore part of the canoe, he began to suck up the water with his lips.

Presently they made an end of drinking, and, running the canoe into a little creek, were about to land among the thick growth that overhung the water

"We shall have to scramble through this to the beach to find our bushes and get the line to the place," said Evans

"We had better paddle round," said Hooker

So they pushed out again into the river and paddled back down it to the sea, and along the shore to the place where the clump of bushes grew Here they landed, pulled the light canoe far up the beach, and then went up towards the edge of the jungle until they could see the opening of the reef and the bushes in a straight line Evans had taken a native implement out of the canoe It was I shaped, and the transverse piece was armed with polished stone Hooker carried the paddle "It is straight now in this direction," said he, "we must push through this till we strike the stream Then we must prospect"

They pushed through a close tangle of reeds, broad fronds, and young trees, and at first it was toilsome going, but very speedily the trees became larger and the ground beneath them opened out The blaze of the sunlight was replaced by insensible degrees by cool shadow The trees became at last vast pillars that rose up to a canopy of greenery far overhead Dim white flowers hung from their stems, and ropy creepers swung from tree to tree The shadow deepened On the ground, blotched fungi and a red brown incrustation became frequent

Evans shivered "It seems almost cold here after the blaze outside"

"I hope we are keeping to the straight," said Hooker

Presently they saw, far ahead, a gap in the sombre

darkness where white shafts of hot sunlight smote into the forest There also was brilliant green under growth and coloured flowers Then they heard the rush of water

"Here is the river We should be close to it now," said Hooker

The vegetation was thick by the river bank Great plants as yet unnamed, grew among the roots of the big trees and spread rosettes of huge green fans towards the strip of sky Many flowers and a creeper with shiny foliage clung to the exposed stems On the water of the broad, quiet pool which the treasure seekers now overlooked there floated big oval leaves and a waxen, pinkish white flower not unlike a water lily Further, as the river bent away from them the water suddenly frothed and became noisy in a rapid

"Well?" said Evans

"We have swerved a little from the straight," said Hooker "That was to be expected"

He turned and looked into the dim cool shadows *of the silent forest behind them* "*If* we beat a little way up and down the stream we should come to something"

"You said——" began Evans

"*He* said there was a heap of stones," said Hooker

The two men looked at each other for a moment

"Let us try a little down stream first," said Evans

They advanced slowly, looking curiously about them Suddenly Evans stopped "What the devil's that?" he said

Hooker followed his finger "Something blue," he said It had come into view as they topped a gentle swell of the ground Then he began to distinguish what it was

He advanced suddenly with hasty steps, until the body that belonged to the limp hand and arm had become visible *His grip tightened on the implement*

he carried The thing was the figure of a Chinaman lying on his face The abandon of the pose was unmistakable.

The two men drew closer together, and stood staring silently at this ominous dead body It lay in a clear space among the trees Near by was a spade after the Chinese pattern, and further off lay a scattered heap of stones, close to a freshly dug hole

"Somebody has been here before,' said Hooker, clearing his throat

Then suddenly Evans began to swear and rave, and stamp upon the ground

Hooker turned white but said nothing He advanced towards the prostrate body He saw the neck was puffed and purple, and the hands and ankles swollen "Pah!" he said, and suddenly turned away and went towards the excavation He gave a cry of surprise He shouted to Evans who was following him slowly

"You fool! It's all right It's here still' Then he turned again and looked at the dead Chinaman and then again at the hole

Evans hurried to the hole Already half exposed by the ill fated wretch beside them lay a number of dull yellow bars He bent down in the hole, and clearing off the soil with his bare hands hastily pulled one of the heavy masses out As he did so a little thorn pricked his hand He pulled the delicate spike out with his fingers and lifted the ingot

"Only gold or lead could weigh like this" he said exultantly

Hooker was still looking at the dead Chinaman He was puzzled

"He stole a march on his friends," he said at last "He came here alone, and some poisonous snake has killed him I wonder how he found the place"

Evans stood with the ingot in his hands What did a dead Chinaman signify? "We shall have to take

th s st ff to the ma nland p ecemeal and bury it there for a h e Hov s a l e get t to the canoe?"

He took h s jacket off and sp ead t on l e gro nd and flung t o or h ee ngo s nto t P e en ly he found that another l t le thorn had p nctured h s sk n

Th s as mu h as we can carry sa d he Then sudden v w h a queer rush of i r tat on What are you s a ng a ?

Hooke tu ned to h m I can t stand h m He n l le l owa ds he co pse Its so l ke——

Rubl h sa d E ans All Ch namen a e al ke

Hooke looked nto h s face I m go ng to bury *tha* anyhow bef e I lend a hand w tl tl s stuff

Don t be a fool Hooker sa d Evans Let that mass of co p on b d

Hoo er hes tated and then h s eye went carefully over the bro vn so l about them It scares me some how he sa d

"The th ng is" sa d Evans what to do w th these ngots Shall we re b y hem over here or take them across the stra t n the canoe?

Hooker tho ght H s p zled gaze wandered among the tall t ee trunks and up nto the remote s nl t g eenery o erhead He shi ered aga n as h s eye rested upon the blue figure of the Ch na nan He s ared search ngly among the grey depths between the trees

What s come to yo Hooker? sa d Evans Have you lost yo r w ts?

Let s get the gold out of th s place anyhow sa d Hooker

He took the ends of the collar of the coat in h s hands and Evans took the oppo te corne s and they l fted the mass Wh ch way? sa d Evans "To the canoe?

"It s q eer" sa d Evans when they had advanced only a few steps "but my arms ache s ll wi h that paddl ng

"Curse .. " he said "But they ache! I must rest"

They let the coat down Evans' face was white, and little drops of sweat stood out upon his forehead "It's stuffy, somehow, in this forest"

Then with an abrupt transition to unreasonable anger "What is the good of waiting here all the day? Lend a hand, I say! You have done nothing but moon since we saw the dead Chinaman'

Hooker was looking steadfastly at his companion's face He helped raise the coat bearing the ingots and they went forward perhaps a hundred yards in silence Evans began to breathe heavily "Can t you speak?" he said

"Whats the matter with you?" said Hooker

Evans stumbled, and then with a sudden curse flung the coat from him He stood for a moment staring at Hooker, and then with a groan clutched at his own throat

"Don t come near me," he said, and went and leant against a tree Then in a steadier voice, "I'll be better in a minute"

Presently his grip upon the trunk loosened, and he slipped slowly down the stem of the tree until he was a crumpled heap at its foot His hands were clenched convulsively His face became distorted with pain Hooker approached him

"Don't touch me! Don't touch me!" said Evans in a stifled voice "Put the gold back on the coat"

"Can't I do anything for you?' said Hooker

"Put the gold back on the coat"

As Hooker handled the ingots he felt a little prick on the ball of his thumb He looked at his hand and saw a slender thorn, perhaps two inches in length

Evans gave an inarticulate cry and rolled over

Hooker's jaw dropped He stared at the thorn for a moment with dilated eyes Then he looked at Evans, who was now crumpled together on the ground, his

this stuff to the mainland piecemeal, and bury it there for a while How shall we get it to the canoe?"

He took his jacket off and spread it on the ground, and flung two or three ingots into it Presently he found that another little thorn had punctured his skin

"This is as much as we can carry," said he Then suddenly with a queer rush of irritation, "What are you staring at?"

Hooker turned to him "I can't stand him" He nodded towards the corpse "It's so like——"

"Rubbish!" said Evans "All Chinamen are alike"

Hooker looked into his face "I'm going to bury *that* anyhow, before I lend a hand with this stuff"

"Don't be a fool Hooker," said Evans "Let that mass of corruption bide"

Hooker hesitated, and then his eye went carefully over the brown soil about them "It scares me somehow," he said

"The thing is," said Evans, "what to do with these ingots Shall we re bury them over here, or take them across the strait to the canoe?"

Hooker thought His puzzled gaze wandered among the tall tree trunks, and up into the remote sunlit greenery overhead He shivered again as his eye rested upon the blue figure of the Chinaman He stared searchingly among the grey depths between the trees

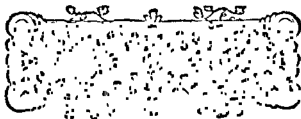
"What's come to you, Hooker?" said Evans "Have you lost your wits?"

"Let's get the gold out of this place, anyhow," said Hooker

He took the ends of the collar of the coat in his hands, and Evans took the opposite corners, and they lifted the mass "Which way?" said Evans "To the canoe?"

"It's queer," said Evans, when they had advanced only a few steps, "but my arms ache still with that paddling . . .

THE PLATTNER STORY
AND OTHERS



STORY THE FIRST

The Plattner Story

WHETHER the story of Gottfried Plattner is to be credited or not, is a pretty question in the value of evidence On the one hand, we have seven witnesses—to be perfectly exact we have six and a half pairs of eyes, and one undeniable fact, and on the other we have—what is it?—prejudice, common sense, the inertia of opinion Never were there seven more honest seeming witnesses never was there a more undeniable fact than the inversion of Gottfried Plattner's anatomical structure, and—never was there a more preposterous story than the one they have to tell! The most preposterous part of the story is the worthy Gottfried's contribution (for I count him as one of the seven) Heaven forbid that [illegible] tion [illegible] the f[illegible] is so[illegible] Plattner, but what that crooked factor is, I will admit as frankly, I do not know I have been surprised at the credit accorded to the story in the most unexpected and

authoritative quarters The fairest way to the reader, however, will be for me to tell it without further comment

Gottfried Plattner is, in spite of his name, a free-born Englishman His father was an Alsatian who came to England in the Sixties, married a respectable English girl of unexceptionable antecedents, and died, after a wholesome and uneventful life (devoted, I understand, chiefly to the laying of parquet flooring), in 1887 Gottfried's age is seven and twenty He is, by virtue of his heritage of three languages, Modern Languages Master in a small private school in the South of England To the casual observer he is singularly like any other Modern Languages Master in any other small private school His costume is neither very costly nor very fashionable, but, on the other hand, it is not markedly cheap or shabby, his complexion, like his height and his bearing, is inconspicuous You would notice perhaps that, like the majority of people, his face was not absolutely symmetrical, his right eye a little larger than the left, and his jaw a trifle heavier on the right side If you, as an ordinary careless person, were to bare his chest and feel his heart beating, you would probably find it quite like the heart of anyone else But here you and the trained observer would part company If you found his heart quite ordinary, the trained observer would find it quite otherwise And once the thing was pointed out to you, you too would perceive the peculiarity easily enough It is that Gottfried's heart beats on the right side of his body

Now that is not the only singularity of Gottfried's [illegible] all the other unsymmetrical parts of his body are similarly misplaced The right lobe of his liver is on the left side, the left on his right, while his lungs too, are similarly contraposed What

is still more singular, unless Gottfried is a consummate actor we must believe that his right hand has recently become h[illegible] left S[illegible] are about to [illegible] as found the [illegible] right to left [illegible] annot throw with his right hand, he is perplexed at meal times between knife and fork, and his ideas of the rule of the road—he is a cyclist—are still a dangerous confusion And there is not a scrap of evidence to show that before these occurrences Gottfried was at all left handed

There is yet another wonderful fact in this preposterous business Gottfried produces three photographs of himself You have him at the age of five or six, thrusting fat legs at you from under a plaid [illegible] e it is one of those cheap ' Gem photographs that were then in vogue, taken direct upon metal and therefore reversing things just as a looking glass would The third photograph represents him at one and twenty, and confirms the record of the others There seems here evidence of the strongest confirmatory character that Gottfried has exchanged his left side for his right Yet how a human being can be so changed short of a fantastic and pointless miracle it is exceedingly hard to suggest

In one way of course these facts might be explicable on the supposition that Plattner has undertaken an elaborate mystification on the strength of his heart's displacement Photographs may be fudged and left handedness imitated But the character of the man does not lend itself to any such theory He is quiet, practical, unobtrusive, and thoroughly sane from the Nordau standpoint He likes beer and smokes

moderately, takes walking exercise daily, and has a healthily high estimate of the value of his teaching. He has a good but untrained tenor voice, and takes a pleasure in singing airs of a popular and cheerful character. He is fond, but not morbidly fond, of reading—chiefly fiction pervaded with a vaguely pious optimism,—sleeps well, and rarely dreams. He is, in fact, the very last person to evolve a fantastic fable. Indeed, so far from forcing this story upon the world, he has been singularly reticent on the matter. He meets inquirers with a certain engaging—bashfulness is almost the word, that disarms the most suspicious. He seems genuinely ashamed that anything so unusual has occurred to him.

It is to be regretted that Plattner's aversion to the idea of post mortem dissection may postpone, perhaps for ever, the positive proof that his entire body has had its left and right sides transposed. Upon that fact mainly the credibility of his story hangs. There is no way of taking a man and moving him about *in space* as ordinary people understand space, that will result in our changing his sides. Whatever you do, his right is still his right, his left his left. You can do that with a perfectly thin and flat thing, of course. If you were to cut a figure out of paper, any figure with a right and left side, you could change its sides simply by lifting it up and turning it over. But with a solid it is different. Mathematical theorists tell us that the only way in which the right and left sides of a solid body can be changed is by taking that body clean out of space as we know it,—taking it out of ordinary existence, that is, and turning it somewhere outside space. This is a little abstruse, no doubt, but anyone with a slight knowledge of mathematical theory will assure the reader of its truth. To put the thing in technical language, the curious inversion of Plattner's right and left sides is proof that he has moved out of our space into what is called the Fourth Dimension, and that he

has returned again to our world Unless we choose to consider ourselves the victims of an elaborate and motiveless fabrication, we are almost bound to believe that this has occurred

So much for the tangible facts We come now to the account of the phenomena that attended his temporary disappearance from the world It appears that in the Sussexville Proprietary School, Plattner not only discharged the duties of Modern Languages Master, but also taught chemistry, commercial geography, book-keeping, shorthand, drawing and any other additional subject to which the changing fancies of the boy's parents might direct attention He knew little or nothing of these various subjects, but in secondary as distinguished from Board or elementary schools, knowledge in the teacher is, very properly, by no means so necessary as high moral character and gentlemanly tone In chemistry he was particularly deficient, knowing, he says, nothing beyond the Three Gases (whatever the three gases may be) As, however, his pupils began by knowing nothing, and derived all their information from him, this caused him (or anyone) but little inconvenience for several terms Then a little boy named Whibble joined the school, who had been educated, it seems, by some mischievous relative into an inquiring habit of mind This little boy followed Plattner's lessons with marked and sustained interest, and in order to exhibit his zeal on the subject, brought at various times substances for Plattner to analyse Plattner, flattered by this evidence of his power to awaken interest and trusting to the boy's ignorance, analysed these and even made general statements as to their composition Indeed he was so far stimulated by his pupil as to obtain a work upon analytical chemistry, and study it during his supervision of the evening's preparation He was surprised to find chemistry quite an interesting subject

So far the story is absolutely commonplace But

now the greenish powder comes upon the scene The source of that greenish powder seems, unfortunately, lost Master Whibble tells a tortuous story of finding it done up in a packet in a disused limekiln near the Downs It would have been an excellent thing for Plattner and possibly for Master Whibble's family, if a match could have been applied to that powder there and then The young gentleman certainly did not bring it to school in a packet, but in a common eight ounce graduated medicine bottle plugged with masticated newspaper He gave it to Plattner at the end of the afternoon school Four boys had been detained after school prayers in order to complete some neglected tasks and Plattner was supervising these in the small classroom in which the chemical teaching was conducted The appliances for the practical teaching of chemistry in the Sussexville Proprietary School, as in most private schools in this country, are characterised by a severe simplicity They are kept in a cupboard standing in a recess and having about the same capacity as a common travelling trunk Plattner, being bored with his passive superintendence, seems to have welcomed the intervention of Whibble with his green powder as an agreeable diversion, and, unlocking this cupboard proceeded at once with his analytical experiments Whibble sat, luckily for himself, at a safe distance, regarding him The four malefactors, feigning a profound absorption in their work, watched him furtively with the keenest interest For even within the limits of the Three Gases, Plattner's practical chemistry was, I understand, temerarious

They are practically unanimous in their account of Plattner's proceedings He poured a little of the green powder into a test tube, and tried the substance with water, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, and sulphuric acid in succession Getting no result, he emptied out a little heap—nearly half the bottleful, in fact—upon a slate and tried a match He held the medicine

sion! The evidence of his absolute disappearance, as a consequence of that explosion is indubitable.

It is not necessary to enlarge here upon the commotion excited in the Sussexville Proprietary School, and in Sussexville and elsewhere, by this event. It is quite possible indeed, that some of the readers of these pages may recall the hearing of some remote and dying version of that excitement during the last summer holidays. Lidgett, it would seem, did everything in his power to suppress and minimise the story. He instituted a penalty of twenty-five lines for any mention of Plattner's name among the boys, and stated in the schoolroom that he was clearly aware of his assistant's whereabouts. He was afraid, he explains, that the possibility of an explosion happening, in spite of the elaborate precautions taken to minimise the practical teaching of chemistry, might injure the reputation of the school, and so might any mysterious quality in Plattner's departure. Indeed, he did everything in his power to make the occurrence seem as ordinary as possible. In particular, he cross-examined the five eye-witnesses of the occurrence so searchingly that they began to doubt the plain evidence of their senses. But in spite of these efforts, the tale, in a magnified and distorted state, made a nine days' wonder in the district, and several parents withdrew their sons on colourable pretexts. Not the least remarkable point in the matter is the fact that a large number of people in the neighbourhood dreamed singularly vivid dreams of Plattner during the period of excitement before his return, and that these dreams had a curious uniformity. In almost all of them Plattner was seen, sometimes singly, sometimes in company, wandering about through a coruscating iridescence. In all cases his face was pale and distressed, and in some he gesticulated towards the dreamer. One or two of the boys, evidently under the influence of nightmare, fancied that Plattner approached them with remarkable swiftness, and seemed

to look closely into their very eyes Others fled with Plattner from the pursuit of vague and extraordinary creatures of a globular shape But all these fancies were forgotten in inquiries and speculations when, on the Wednesday next but one after the Monday of the explosion, Plattner returned

The circumstances of his return were as singular as those of his departure So far as Mr Lidgett's somewhat choleric outline can be filled in from Plattner's hesitating statements, it would appear that on Wednesday evening, towards the hour of sunset the former gentleman, having dismissed evening preparation, was engaged in his garden, picking and eating strawberries, a fruit of which he is inordinately fond It is a large old fashioned garden, secured from observation fortunately, by a high and ivy covered red brick wall Just as he was stooping over a particularly prolific plant, there was a flash in the air and a heavy thud, and before he could look round, some heavy body struck him violently from behind He was pitched forward crushing the strawberries he held in his hand, and with such force that his silk hat—Mr Lidgett adheres to the older ideas of scholastic costume—was driven violently down upon his forehead and almost over one eye This heavy missile, which slid over him sideways and collapsed into a sitting posture among the strawberry plants, proved to be our long lost Mr Gottfried Plattner, in an extremely dishevelled condition He was collarless and hatless, his linen was dirty, and there was blood upon his hands Mr Lidgett was so indignant and surprised that he remained on all fours, and with his hat jammed down on his eye, while he expostulated vehemently with Plattner for his disrespectful and unaccountable conduct

This scarcely idyllic scene completes what I may call the exterior version of the Plattner story—its exoteric aspect It is quite unnecessary to enter here into all the details of his dismissal by Mr Lidgett Such

details with the full names and dates and references, will be found in the larger report of these occurrences that was laid before the Society for the Investigation of Abnormal Phenomena The singular transposition of Plattner's right and left sides was scarcely observed for the first day or so and then first in connection with his disposition to write from right to left across the blackboard He concealed rather than ostended this curious confirmatory circumstance, as he considered it would unfavourably affect his prospects in a new situation The displacement of his heart was discovered some months after, when he was having a tooth extracted under anæsthetics He then, very unwillingly, allowed a cursory surgical examination to be made of himself, with a view to a brief account in the *Journal of Anatomy* That exhausts the statement of the material facts, and we may now go on to consider Plattner's account of the matter

But first let us clearly differentiate between the preceding portion of this story and what is to follow All I have told thus far is established by such evidence as even a criminal lawyer would approve Every one of the witnesses is still alive, the reader, if he have the leisure, may hunt the lads out to morrow, or even brave the terrors of the redoubtable Lidgett, and cross examine and trap and test to his heart's content, Gottfried Plattner, himself, and his twisted heart and his three photographs are producible It may be taken as proved that he did disappear for nine days as the consequence of an explosion, that he returned almost as violently, under circumstances in their nature annoying to Mr Lidgett, whatever the details of those circumstances may be, and that he returned inverted, just as a reflection returns from a mirror From the last fact, as I have already stated, it follows almost inevitably that Plattner, during those nine days, must have been in some state of existence altogether out of space The evidence to these statements is, indeed, far

stronger than that upon which most murderers are hanged But for his own particular account of where he had been, with its confused explanations and well nigh self-contradictory details, we have only Mr Gottfried Plattner's word I do not wish to discredit that, but I must point out—what so many writers upon obscure psychic phenomena fail to do—that we are passing here from the practically undeniable to that kind of matter which any reasonable man is entitled to believe or reject as he thinks proper The previous statements render it plausible its discordance with common experience tilts it towards the incredible I would prefer not to sway the beam of the reader's judgment either way, but simply to tell the story as Plattner told it me

He gave me his narrative, I may state, at my house at Chislehurst, and so soon as he had left me that evening I went into my study and wrote down everything as I remembered it Subsequently he was good enough to read over a type written copy so that its substantial correctness is undeniable

He states that at the moment of the explosion he distinctly thought he was killed He felt lifted off his feet and driven forcibly backward It is a curious fact for psychologists that he thought clearly during his backward flight, and wondered whether he should hit the chemistry cupboard or the blackboard easel His heels struck ground, and he staggered and fell heavily into a sitting position on something soft and firm For a moment the concussion stunned him He became aware at once of a vivid scent of singed hair and he seemed to hear the voice of Lidgett asking for him You will understand that for a time his mind was greatly confused

At first he was distinctly under the impression that he was still in the classroom He perceived quite distinctly the surprise of the boys and the entry of Mr Lidgett He is quite positive upon that score

He did not hear their remarks, but that he ascribed to the deafening effect of the experiment Things about him seemed curiously dark and faint, but his mind explained that on the obvious but mistaken idea that the explosion had engendered a huge volume of dark smoke Through the dimness the figures of Lidgett and the boys moved, as faint and silent as ghosts Plattner's face still tingled with the stinging heat of the flash He was, he says, "all muddled" His first definite thoughts seem to have been of his personal safety He thought he was perhaps blinded and deafened He felt his limbs and face in a gingerly manner Then his perceptions grew clearer, and he was astonished to miss the old familiar desks and other schoolroom furniture about him Only dim, uncertain, grey shapes stood in the place of these Then came a thing that made him shout aloud and awoke his stunned faculties to instant activity *Two of the boys, gesticulating walked one after the other clean through him!* Neither manifested the slightest consciousness of his presence It is difficult to imagine the sensation he felt They came against him, he says, with no more force than a wisp of mist

Plattner's first thought after that was that he was dead Having been brought up with thoroughly sound views in these matters, however, he was a little surprised to find his body still about him His second conclusion was that he was not dead but that the others were that the explosion had destroyed the Sussexville Proprietary School and every soul in it except himself But that, too was scarcely satisfactory He was thrown back upon astonished observation

Everything about him was extraordinarily dark at first it seemed to have an altogether ebony blackness Overhead was a black firmament The only touch of light in the scene was a faint greenish glow at the edge of the sky in one direction, which threw into prominence a horizon of undulating black hills This, I say, was his

impression at first. As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he began to distinguish a faint quality of different-tinting greenish colour in the circumambient night. Against this background the furniture and occupants of the classroom, it seems, stood out like phosphorescent spectres, faint and impalpable. He extended his hand, and thrust it without an effort through the wall of the room by the fireplace.

He describes himself as making a strenuous effort to attract attention. He shouted to Lidgett, and tried to seize the boys as they went to and fro. He only desisted from these attempts when Mrs. Lidgett, whom he, as an Assistant Master, naturally disliked, entered the room. He says the sensation of being in the world, and yet not a part of it, was an extraordinarily disagreeable one. He compared his feelings, not inaptly, to those of a cat watching a mouse through a window. Whenever he made a motion to communicate with the dim, familiar world about him, he found an invisible, incomprehensible barrier preventing intercourse.

He then turned his attention to his solid environment. He found the medicine bottle still unbroken in his hand, with the remainder of the green powder therein. He put this in his pocket, and began to feel about him. Apparently he was sitting on a boulder of rock covered with a velvety moss. The dark country about him he was unable to see, the faint, misty picture of the schoolroom blotting it out, but he had a feeling (due perhaps to a cold wind) that he was near the crest of a hill, and that a steep valley fell away beneath his feet. The green glow along the edge of the sky seemed to be growing in extent and intensity. He stood up, rubbing his eyes.

It would seem that he made a few steps, going steeply downhill, and then stumbled, nearly fell, and sat down again upon a jagged mass of rock to watch the dawn. He became aware that the world about him was absolutely silent. It was as still as it was dark, and though

However, this is a digression As the green sun rose, a long street of black buildings became perceptible, though only darkly and indistinctly, in the gorge, and, after some hesitation, Plattner began to clamber down the precipitous descent towards them The descent was long and exceedingly tedious, being so not only by the extraordinary steepness, but also by reason of the looseness of the boulders with which the whole face of the hill was strewn The noise of his descent—now and then his heels struck fire from the rocks—seemed now the only sound in the universe, for the beating of the bell had ceased As he drew nearer he perceived that the various edifices had a singular resemblance to tombs and mausoleums and monuments, saving only that they were all uniformly black instead of being white as most sepulchres are And then he saw, crowding out of the largest building very much as people disperse from church, a number of pallid, rounded, pale green figures These scattered in several directions about the broad street of the place, some going through side alleys and reappearing upon the steepness of the hill, others entering some of the small black buildings which lined the way

At the sight of these things drifting up towards him, Plattner stopped staring They were not walking, they were indeed limbless, and they had the appearance of human heads beneath which a tadpole like body swung He was too astonished at their strangeness, too full indeed of strangeness, to be seriously alarmed by them They drove towards him, in front of the chill wind that was blowing uphill, much as soap bubbles drive before a draught And as he looked at the nearest of those approaching he saw it was indeed a human head, albeit with singularly large eyes and wearing such an expression of distress and anguish as he had never seen before upon mortal countenance He was surprised to find that it did not turn to regard him, but seemed to be watching and following some unseen moving thing

For a moment he was puzzled, and then it occurred to him that this creature was watching with its enormous eyes something that was happening in the world he had just left. Nearer it came, and nearer, and he was too astonished to cry out. It made a very faint fretting sound as it came close to him. Then it struck his face with a gentle pat—its touch was very cold—and drove past him, and upward towards the crest of the hill.

An extraordinary conviction flashed across Plattner's mind that this head had a strong likeness to Lidgett. Then he turned his attention to the other heads that were now swarming thickly up the hillside. None made the slightest sign of recognition. One or two indeed, came close to his head and almost followed the example of the first, but he dodged convulsively out of the way. Upon most of them he saw the same expression of unavailing regret he had seen upon the first, and heard the same faint sounds of wretchedness from them. One or two wept, and one rolling swiftly uphill wore an expression of diabolical rage. But others were cold, and several had a look of gratified interest in their eyes. One, at least, was almost in an ecstasy of happiness. Plattner does not remember that he recognised any more likenesses in those he saw at this time.

For several hours, perhaps, Plattner watched these strange things dispersing themselves over the hills, and not till long after they had ceased to issue from the clustering black buildings in the gorge did he resume his downward climb. The darkness about him increased so much that he had a difficulty in stepping true. Overhead the sky was now a bright pale green. He felt neither hunger nor thirst. Later, when he did, he found a chilly stream running down the centre of the gorge, and the rare moss upon the boulders, when he tried it at last in desperation, was good to eat.

He groped about among the tombs that ran down the gorge, seeking vaguely for some clue to these inexplicable things. After a long time he came to the

entrance of the big mausoleum like building from which the heads had issued In this he found a group of green lights burning upon a kind of basaltic altar, and a bell rope from a belfry overhead hanging down into the centre of the place Round the wall ran a lettering of fire in a character unknown to him While he was still wondering at the purport of these things, he heard the receding tramp of heavy feet echoing far down the street He ran out into the darkness again but he could see nothing He had a mind to pull the bell rope and finally decided to follow the footsteps But although he ran far, he never overtook them and his shouting was of no avail The gorge seemed to extend an interminable distance It was as dark as earthly starlight throughout its length, while the ghastly green day lay along the upper edge of its precipices There were none of the heads, now, below They were all, it seemed, busily occupied along the upper slopes Looking up he saw them drifting hither and thither some hovering stationary, some flying swiftly through the air It reminded him he said, of "big snowflakes", only these were black and pale green

In pursuing the firm, undeviating footsteps that he never overtook, in groping into new regions of this endless devil's dyke, in clambering up and down the pitiless heights, in wandering about the summits, and in watching the drifting faces, Plattner states that he spent the better part of seven or eight days He did not keep count, he says Though once or twice he found eyes watching him he had word with no living soul He slept among the rocks on the hillside In the gorge things earthly were invisible, because, from the earthly standpoint, it was far underground On the altitudes, so soon as the earthly day began, the world became visible to him He found himself sometimes stumbling over the dark green rocks or arresting himself on a precipitous brink, while all about him the green branches of the Sussexville lanes were swaying

or, again, he seemed to be walking through the Sussexville streets, or watching unseen the private business of some household And then it was he discovered that to almost every human being in our world there pertained some of these drifting heads, that everyone in the world is watched intermittently by these helpless disembodiments

What are they—these Watchers of the Living? Plattner never learned But two that presently found and followed him, were like his childhood's memory of his father and mother Now and then other faces turned their eyes upon him eyes like those of dead people who had *swayed him, or injured him, or helped* him in his youth and manhood Whenever they looked at him, Plattner was *overcome* with a strange sense of responsibility To his mother he ventured to speak, but she made no answer She looked sadly, steadfastly, and *tenderly—a little reproachfully, too, it seemed—* into his eyes

He simply tells this story he does not endeavour to explain We are left to surmise who these Watchers of the Living may be, or if they are indeed the Dead, *why they should so closely and passionately watch a* world they have left for ever It may be—indeed to my mind it seems just—that, when our life has closed, when evil or good is no longer a choice for us, we may still have to witness the working out of the train of *consequences we have laid If human souls continue* after death, then surely human interests continue after death But that is merely my own guess at the meaning of the things seen Plattner offers no interpretation, for none was given him It is well the reader should *understand this clearly Day after day, with his head* reeling, he wandered about this green lit world outside the world, weary and, towards the end weak and hungry By day—by our earthly day, that is—the ghostly vision of the old familiar scenery of Sussexville, all about *him, irked and worried him* He could *not*

see where to put his feet, and ever and again with a chilly touch one of these Watching Souls would come against his face. And after dark the multitude of these Watchers about him, and their intent distress, confused his mind beyond describing. A great longing to return to the earthly life that was so near and yet so remote consumed him. The unearthliness of things about him produced a positively painful mental distress. He was worried beyond describing by his own particular followers. He would shout at them to desist from staring at him, would scold at them, hurry away from them. They were always mute and intent. Run as he might over the uneven ground, they followed his destinies.

On the ninth day, towards evening, Plattner heard the invisible footsteps approaching, far away down the gorge. He was then wandering over the broad crest of the same hill upon which he had fallen in his entry into this strange Other World of his. He turned to hurry down into the gorge, feeling his way hastily, and was arrested by the sight of the thing that was happening in a room in a back street near the school. Both of the people in the room he knew by sight. The windows were open, the blinds up, and the setting sun shone clearly into it, so that it came out quite brightly at first, a vivid oblong of room, lying like a magic lantern picture upon the black landscape and the livid green dawn. In addition to the sunlight, a candle had just been lit in the room.

On the bed lay a lank man, his ghastly white face terrible upon the tumbled pillow. His clenched hands were raised above his head. A little table beside the bed carried a few medicine bottles, some toast and water, and an empty glass. Every now and then the lank man's lips fell apart, to indicate a word he could not articulate. But the woman did not notice that he wanted anything, because she was busy turning out papers from an old fashioned bureau in the opposite corner of the room. At first the picture was very vivid

indeed, but as the green dawn behind it grew brighter and brighter, so it became fainter and more and more transparent.

As the echoing footsteps paced nearer and nearer, those footsteps that sound not in this Other World and come so silently in this, Plattner perceived about him a great multitude of dim faces gathering together out of the darkness and watching the two people in the room. Never before had he seen so many of the Watchers of the Living. At first he had eyes only for the sufferer in the room, and then in [illegible] in infinite anguish watched the woman as she hunted with greedy eyes for something she could not find. They crowded about Plattner, they came across his sight and buffeted his face, the noise of their unavailing regret was all about him. He saw clearly now and then. At other times the pictures quivered dully through the veil of green reflections upon their movements. In the room it must have been very still, and Plattner says the candle flame streamed up into a perfectly vertical line of smoke, but in his ears each footfall and its echoes beat like a clap of thunder. And the faces! Two, more particularly, near the woman's: one a woman's also, white and clear featured, a face which might have once been cold and hard, but which was now softened by the touch of a wisdom strange to earth. The other might have been the woman's father. Both were evidently absorbed in the contemplation of some act of hateful meanness, so it seemed, which they could no longer guard against and prevent. Behind were others, teachers it may be, who had taught ill, friends whose influence had failed. And over the man, too—a multitude, but none that seemed to be parents or teachers! Faces that might once have been coarse, now purged to strength by sorrow! And in the forefront one face, a girlish one, neither angry nor remorseful, but merely patient and weary, and, as it seemed to Plattner, waiting for relief. His powers of description fail him at the

memory of this multitude of ghastly countenances They gathered on the stroke of the bell He saw them all in the space of a second It would seem that he was so worked upon by his excitement that quite involuntarily his restless fingers took the bottle of green powder out of his pocket and held it before him But he does not remember that

Abruptly the footsteps ceased He waited for the next and there was silence, and then suddenly, cutting through the unexpected stillness like a keen, thin blade came the first stroke of the bell At that the multitudinous faces swayed to and fro and a louder crying began all about him The woman did not hear she was burning something now in the candle flame At the second stroke everything grew dim,--and a breath of wind, icy cold, blew through the host of watchers They swirled about him like an eddy of dead leaves in the spring and at the third stroke something was extended through them to the bed You have heard of a beam of light This was like a beam of darkness and looking again at it, Plattner saw that it was a shadowy arm and hand

The green sun was now topping the black desolations of the horizon, and the vision of the room was very faint Plattner could see that the white of the bed struggled and was convulsed, and that the woman looked round over her shoulder at it, startled

The cloud of watchers lifted high like a puff of green dust before the wind, and swept swiftly downward towards the temple in the gorge Then suddenly Plattner understood the meaning of the shadowy black arm that stretched across his shoulder and clutched its prey He did not dare turn his head to see the Shadow behind the arm With a violent effort, and covering his eyes he set himself to run, made perhaps twenty strides, then slipped on a boulder and fell He fell forward on his hands and the bottle smashed and exploded as he touched the ground

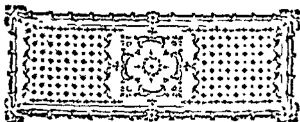
In another moment he found himself stunned and bleeding, sitting face to face with Lidgett in the old walled garden behind the school

There the story of Plattner's experiences ends I have resis ed, I believe successfully the natural disposition of a writer of fiction to dress up incidents of this sort I have told the thing as far as possible in the order in which Plattner told it to me I have carefully avoided any attempt at style, effect or construction It would have been easy, for instance to have worked the scene of the death bed into a kind of plot in which Plattner might have been involved But quite apart from the objectionableness of falsifying a most extraordinary true story, any such trite devices would spoil to my mind, the peculiar effect of this dark world with its livid green illumination and its drifting Watchers of the Living which, unseen and unapproachable to us, is yet lying all about us

It remains to add that a death did actually occur in Vincent Terrace, just beyond the school garden and, so, far as can be proved, at the moment of Plattner's return Deceased was a rate collector and insurance agent His widow who was much younger than himself married last month a Mr Whymper, a veterinary surgeon of Allbeeding As the portion of this story given here has in various forms circulated orally in Sussexville she has consented to my use of her name on condition that I make it distinctly known that she emphatically contradicts every detail of Plattner's *account of her husband's last moments She burnt* no will, she says, although Plattner never accused her of doing so her husband made but one will, and that just after their marriage Certainly, from a man who had never seen it, Plattner's account of the furniture of the room was curiously accurate

One other thing even at the risk of an irksome repetition, I must insist upon lest I seem to favour the

credulous superstitious view Plattner's absence frot the world for nine days is, I think, proved But tha does not prove his story It is quite conceivable tha even outside space hallucinations may be possible That at least the reader must bear distinctly in mind



STORY THE SECOND

The Argonauts of the Air

ONE saw Monson's Flying Machine from the windows of the trains passing either along the South-Western main line or along the line between Wimbledon and Worcester Park,—to be more exact, one saw the huge scaffoldings which limited the flight of the apparatus. They rose over the tree tops, a massive alley of interlacing iron and timber, and an enormous web of ropes and tackle, extending the best part of two miles. From the Leatherhead branch this alley was foreshortened and in part hidden by a hill with villas, but from the main line one had it in profile, a complex tangle of girders and curving bars, very impressive to the excursionists from Portsmouth and Southampton and the West. Monson had taken up the work where Maxim had left it, had gone on at first with an utter contempt for the journalistic wit and ignorance that had irritated and hampered his predecessor, and had

spent (it was said) rather more than half his immense fortune upon his experiments The results, to an impatient generation, seemed inconsiderable When some five years had passed after the growth of the colossal iron groves at Worcester Park, and Monson still failed to put in a fluttering appearance over Trafalgar Square, even the Isle of Wight trippers felt their liberty to smile And such intelligent people as did not consider Monson a fool stricken with the mania for invention denounced him as being (for no particular reason) a self advertising quack

Yet now and again a morning trainload of season ticket holders would see a white monster rush headlong through the airy tracery of guides and bars and hear the further stays, nettings and buffers snap, creak, and groan with the impact of the blow Then there would be an efflorescence of black set white rimmed faces along the sides of the train, and the morning papers would be neglected for a vigorous discussion of the possibility of flying (in which nothing new was ever said by any chance), until the train reached Waterloo, and its cargo of season ticket holders dispersed themselves over London Or the fathers and mothers in some multitudinous train of weary excursionists returning exhausted from a day of rest by the sea, would find the dark fabric, standing out against the evening sky, useful in diverting some bilious child from its introspection, and be suddenly startled by the swift transit of a huge black flapping shape that strained upward against the guides. It was a great and forcible thing beyond dispute, and excellent for conversation, yet, all the same, it was but flying in leading strings, and most of those who witnessed it scarcely counted its flight as flying More of a switchback it seemed to the run of the folk

Monson, I say, did not trouble himself very keenly about the opinions of the press at first But possibly he, even had formed but a poor idea of the time it would take before the tactics of flying were mastered,

the swift assured adjustment of the big soaring shape to every gust and chance movement of the air nor had he clearly reckoned the money this prolonged struggle against gravitation would cost him And he was not so pachydermatous as he seemed Secretly he had his periodical bundles of cuttings sent him by Romeike he had his periodical reminders from his banker and if he did not mind the initial ridicule and scepticism he felt the growing neglect as the months went by and the money dribbled away Time was when Monson had sent the enterprising journalist, keen after readable matter, empty from his gates But when the enterprising journalist ceased from troubling Monson was *anything but satisfied in his heart of hearts Still day*

[illegible]

tens And at last came an anniversary

Monson sitting in the little drawing shed, suddenly noticed the date on Woodhouse's calendar

"It was five years ago to-day that we began," he said to *Woodhouse suddenly*

"Is it?" said Woodhouse

"It's the alterations play the devil with us," said Monson, biting a paper fastener

The drawings for the new vans to the hinder screw lay on the table before him as he spoke He pitched the mutilated brass paper fastener into the waste paper basket and drummed with his fingers "These alterations! Will the mathematicians ever be clever enough to save us all this patching and experimenting? Five years—learning by rule of thumb, when one might think that it was possible to calculate the whole thing out beforehand The cost of it! I might have hired three senior wranglers for life But they'd only have developed some beautifully useless theorems in pneumatics What a time it has been, Woodhouse!"

"These mouldings will take three weeks," said Woodhouse. "At special prices."

"Three weeks," said Monson, and sat drumming.

"Three weeks certain," said Woodhouse, an excellent engineer, but no good as a comforter. He drew the sheets towards him and began shading a bar.

Monson stopped drumming and began to bite his finger nails, staring the while at Woodhouse's head.

"How long have they been calling this Monson's Folly?" he said suddenly.

"*Oh!* Year or so," said Woodhouse carelessly, without looking up.

Monson sucked the air in between his teeth, and went to the window. The stout iron columns carrying the elevated rails upon which the start of the machine was made rose up close by, and the machine was hidden by the upper edge of the window. Through the grove of iron pillars, red painted and ornate with rows of bolts, one had a glimpse of the pretty scenery towards Esher. A train went gliding noiselessly across the middle distance, its rattle drowned by the hammering of the workmen overhead. Monson could imagine the grinning faces at the windows of the carriages. He swore savagely under his breath, and dabbed viciously at a blowfly that suddenly became noisy on the window pane.

"What's up?" said Woodhouse, staring in surprise at his employer.

"I'm about sick of this."

Woodhouse scratched his cheek. "Oh!" he said, after an assimilating pause. He pushed the drawing away from him.

"Here these fools . . . I'm trying to conquer a new element—trying to do a thing that will revolutionise life. And instead of taking an intelligent interest, they grin and make their stupid jokes, and call me and my appliances names."

"Asses," said Woodhouse, letting his eye fall again on the drawing.

The epithet, curiously enough, made Monson wince. "I'm about sick of it, Woodhouse, *anyhow*," he said, after a pause.

Woodhouse shrugged his shoulders.

"There's nothing for it but patience, I suppose," said Monson, sticking his hands in his pockets. "I've started. I've made my bed, and I've got to lie on it. I can't go back. I'll see it through, and spend every penny I have and every penny I can borrow. But I tell you, Woodhouse, I'm infernally sick of it all the same. If I'd paid a tenth part of the money towards some political greaser's expenses—I'd have been a baronet before this."

Monson paused. Woodhouse stared in front of him with a blank expression he always employed on occasions of sympathy, and tapped his pencil-case on the table. Monson stared at him for a minute.

"Oh, *damn!*" said Monson, suddenly and abruptly rushed out of the room.

Woodhouse continued his sympathetic rigour for perhaps half a minute. Then he sighed and resumed the shading of the drawings. Something had evidently upset Monson. Nice chap, and generous, but difficult to get on with. It was the way with every amateur who had anything to do with engineering—wanted everything finished at once. But Monson had really the patience of the expert. Odd he was so irritable. Nice, and round that aluminium rod did look now. Woodhouse threw back his head and put it first this side and then that, to appreciate his bit of shading better.

"Mr. Woodhouse," said Hooper, the foreman of the labourers, putting his head in at the door.

"Hullo!" said Woodhouse, without turning round.

"Nothing happened, sir?" said Hooper.

"Happened?" said Woodhouse.

"The governor just been up the rails swearing like a ornader."

"*Oh!*" said Woodhouse.

"It ain't like him, sir"

"No?"

"And I was thinking perhaps"—

"Don't think," said Woodhouse, still admiring the drawings

Hooper knew Woodhouse, and he shut the door suddenly with a vicious slam Woodhouse stared stonily before him for some further minutes, and then made an ineffectual effort to pick his teeth with his pencil Abruptly he desisted, pitched that old, tried, and stumpy servitor across the room, got up, stretched himself, and followed Hooper

He looked ruffled—it was visible to every workman he met When a millionaire who has been spending thousands on experiments that employ quite a little army of people suddenly indicates that he is sick of the undertaking, there is almost invariably a certain amount of mental friction in the ranks of the little army he employs And even before he indicates his intentions, there are speculations and murmurs, a watching of faces and a study of straws Hundreds of people knew before the day was out that Monson was ruffled, Woodhouse ruffled Hooper ruffled A workman's wife for instance (whom Monson had never seen), decided to keep her money in the savings bank instead of buying a velveteen dress So far reaching are even the casual curses of a millionaire

Monson found a certain satisfaction in going on the works and behaving disagreeably to as many people as possible After a time even that palled upon him and he rode off the grounds, to every one's relief there, and through the lanes south eastward, to the infinite tribulation of his house steward at Cheam

And the immediate cause of it all, the little grain of annoyance that had suddenly precipitated all this discontent with his life work was—these trivial things that direct all our great decisions!—half a dozen ill considered remarks made by a pretty girl, prettily dressed,

with a beautiful voice and something more than prettiness in her soft grey eyes And of these half dozen remarks, two words especially— Monson's Folly She had felt she was behaving charmingly to Monson she reflected the next day how exceptionally effective she had been, and no one would have been more amazed than she, had she learned the effect she had left on Monson's mind I hope, considering everything that she never knew

"How are you getting on with your flying machine?" she asked ("I wonder if I shall ever meet any one with the sense not to ask that" thought Monson) It will be very dangerous at first, will it not? (Thinks I'm afraid") "Jorgon is going to play presently have you heard him before?" (My mania being attended to, we turn to rational conversation) Gush about Jorgon, gradual decline of conversation ending with— "You must let me know when your flying machine is finished, Mr Monson, and then I will consider the advisability of taking a ticket" (One would think I was still playing inventions in the nursery) But the bitterest thing she said was not meant for Monson's

[illegible]

call that place of his 'Monson's Folly'? He is quite impossible It is really very, very sad I always regard him myself in the light of sunken treasure—the Lost Millionaire, you know"

She was pretty and well educated,—indeed she had written an epigrammatic novelette, but the bitterness was that she was typical She summarised what the world thought of the man who was working sanely, steadily, and surely towards a more tremendous revolution in the appliances of civilisation, a more far reaching alteration in the ways of humanity than has ever been effected since history began They did not even take

him seriously. In a little while he would be proverbial. "I *must* fly now," he said on his way home, smarting with a sense of absolute social failure. "I must fly soon. If it doesn't come off soon, by God! I shall run amuck."

He said that before he had gone through his passbook and his litter of papers. Inadequate as the cause seems, it was that girl's voice and the expression of her eyes that precipitated his discontent. But certainly the discovery that he had no longer even one hundred thousand pounds' worth of realisable property behind him was the poison that made the wound deadly.

It was the next day after this that he exploded upon Woodhouse and his workmen, and thereafter his bearing was consistently grim for three weeks, and anxiety dwelt in Cheam and Ewell, Malden, Morden, and Worcester Park, places that had thriven mightily on his experiments.

Four weeks after that first swearing of his he stood with Woodhouse by the reconstructed machine as it lay across the elevated railway by means of which it gained its initial impetus. The new propeller glittered a brighter white than the rest of the machine, and a gilder, obedient to a whim of Monson's, was picking out the aluminium bars with gold. And looking down the long avenue between the ropes (gilded now with the sunset) one saw red signals, and two miles away an ant-hill of workmen busy altering the last falls of the run into a rising slope.

"I'll *come*," said Woodhouse. "I'll come right enough. But I tell you it's infernally foolhardy. If only you would give another year —"

"I tell you I won't. I tell you the thing works. I've given years enough."—

"It's not that," said Woodhouse. "We're all right with the machine. But it's the steering."—

"Haven't I been rushing night and morning backwards and forwards through this squirrel's cage? If

the thing steers true here, it will steer true all across England. It's just funk, I tell you, Woodhouse. We could have gone a year ago. And besides —"

"Well?" said Woodhouse.

"The *money*!" *snapped Monson over his shoulder.*

"Hang it! I never thought of the money," said Woodhouse, and then, speaking now in a very different tone to that with which he had said the words before, he repeated, "I'll come. Trust me."

Monson turned suddenly, and saw all that Woodhouse had not the dexterity to say, shining on his sunset-lit face. He looked for a moment, then impulsively extended his hand. "Thanks," he said.

"*All right*," said Woodhouse, gripping the hand, and with a queer softening of his features. "Trust me."

Then both men turned to the big apparatus that lay with its flat wings extended upon the carrier, and stared at it meditatively. Monson, guided perhaps by a photographic study of the flight of birds, and by Lilienthal's methods, had gradually drifted from Maxim's shapes towards the bird form again. The thing, however, was *driven by a huge screw behind in the place of the tail,* and so hovering, which needs an almost vertical adjustment of a flat tail, was rendered impossible. The body of the machine was small, almost cylindrical, and pointed. Forward and aft on the pointed ends were two small petroleum engines for the screw, and the navigators sat deep in a canoe-like recess, the foremost one steering, and being protected by a low screen, with two plate-glass windows, from the blinding rush of air. *On either side a monstrous flat framework with a curved* front border could be adjusted so as either to lie horizontally, or to be tilted upward or down. These wings worked rigidly together, or, by releasing a pin, one could be tilted through a small angle independently of its fellow. The front edge of either wing could also be shifted back so as to diminish the wing area about

one sixth The machine was not only not designed to hover, but it was also incapable of fluttering Monson's idea was to get into the air with the initial rush of the apparatus and then to skim, much as a playing card may be skimmed, keeping up the rush by means of the screw at the stern Rooks and gulls fly enormous distances in that way with scarcely a perceptible movement of the wings The bird really drives along on an aërial switch back It glides slanting downward for a space, until it has gained considerable momentum, and then altering the inclination of its wings, glides up again almost to its original altitude Even a Londoner who has watched the birds in the aviary in Regent's Park knows that

But the bird is practising this art from the moment it leaves its nest It has not only the perfect apparatus but the perfect instinct to use it A man off his feet has the poorest skill in balancing Even the simple trick of the bicycle costs him some hours of labour The instantaneous adjustments of the wings, the quick response to a passing breeze, the swift recovery of equilibrium, the giddy, eddying movements that require such absolute precision—all that he must learn, learn [illegible]

shells and guns, is the easy dreaming of a literary man In lives and in treasure the cost of the conquest of the empire of the air may even exceed all that has been spent in man's great conquest of the sea Certainly it will be costlier than the greatest war that has ever devastated the world

No one knew these things better than these two practical men And they knew they were in the front rank of the coming army Yet there is hope even in a forlorn hope Men are killed outright in the reserves sometimes, while others who have been left for dead in the thickest corner crawl out and survive.

"If we miss these meadows"—said Woodhouse presently in his slow way

"My dear chap," said Monson, whose spirits had been rising fitfully during the last few days, "we mustn't miss these meadows There's a quarter of a square mile for us to hit, fences removed, ditches levelled We shall come down all right—rest assured And if we don't"—

"Ah!" said Woodhouse "If we don't!"

Before the day of the start, the newspaper people got wind of the alterations at the northward end of the framework, and Monson was cheered by a decided change in the comments Romeike forwarded him "He will be off some day," said the papers "He will be off some day," said the South-Western season-ticket holders one to another, the seaside excursionists, the Saturday-to-Monday trippers from Sussex and Hampshire and Dorset and Devon the eminent literary people from Haslemere, all remarked eagerly one to another, "He will be off some day," as the familiar scaffolding came in sight. And actually, one bright morning, in full view of the ten past ten train from Basingstoke, Monson's flying machine started on its journey

They saw the carrier running swiftly along its rail, and the white and gold screw spinning in the air They heard the rapid rumble of wheels, and a thud as the carrier reached the buffers at the end of its run Then a whirr as the Flying Machine was shot forward into the networks All that the majority of them had seen and heard before The thing went with a drooping flight through the framework and rose again, and then every beholder shouted, or screamed, or yelled or shrieked after his kind For instead of the customary concussion and stoppage, the Flying Machine flew out of its five years' cage like a bolt from a crossbow, and drove slantingly upward into the air, curved round a little, so as to cross the line, and soared in the direction of Wimbledon Common

It seemed to hang momentarily in the air and grow smaller then it ducked and vanished over the clustering blue tree tops to the east of Coombe Hill, and no one stopped staring and gasping until long after it had disappeared

That was what the people in the train from Basingstoke saw If you had drawn a line down the middle of that train from engine to guard's van, you would not have found a living soul on the opposite side to the flying machine It was a mad rush from window to window as the thing crossed the line And the engine driver and stoker never took their eyes off the low hills about Wimbledon and never noticed that they had run clean through Coombe and Malden and Raynes Park, until with returning animation, they found themselves pelting at the most indecent pace, into Wimbledon station

From the moment when Monson had started the carrier with a "*Now!*" neither he nor Woodhouse said a word Both men sat with clenched teeth Monson had crossed the line with a curve that was too sharp, and Woodhouse had opened and shut his white lips, but neither spoke Woodhouse simply gripped his seat, and breathed sharply through his teeth, watching the blue country to the west rushing past, and down, and away from him Monson knelt at his post forward, and his hands trembled on the spoked wheel that moved the wings He could see nothing before him but a mass of white clouds in the sky

The machine went slanting upward, travelling with an enormous speed still, but losing momentum every moment The land ran away underneath with diminishing speed

"*Now!*" said Woodhouse at last, and with a violent effort Monson wrenched over the wheel and altered the angle of the wings The machine seemed to hang for half a minute motionless in mid air, and then he saw the hazy blue house covered hills of Kilburn and Hamp-

stead jump up before his eyes and rise steadily until the little sunlit dome of the Albert Hall appeared through his windows For a moment he scarcely understood the meaning of this upward rush of the horizon, but as the nearer and nearer houses came into view he realised what he had done He had turned the wings over too far, and they were swooping steeply downward towards the Thames

The thought, the question the realisation were all the business of a second of time "Too much gasped Woodhouse Monson brought the wheel half way back with a jerk, and forthwith the Kilburn and Hampstead ridge dropped again to the lower edge of his windows They had been a thousand feet above Coombe and Malden station, fifty seconds after they whizzed at a frightful pace, not eighty feet above the East Putney station, on the Metropolitan District line to the screaming astonishment of a platformful of people Monson flung up the vans against the air, and over Fulham they rushed up their atmospheric switchback again steeply— too steeply The 'buses went floundering across the Fulham Road, the people yelled

Then down again too steeply still and the distant trees and houses about Primrose Hill leapt up across Monson's window, and then suddenly he saw straight before him the greenery of Kensington Gardens and the towers of the Imperial Institute They were driving straight down upon South Kensington The pinnacles of the Natural History Museum rushed up into view There came one fatal second of swift thought, a moment of hesitation Should he try and clear the towers or swerve eastward?

He made a hesitating attempt to release the right wing left the catch half released, and gave a frantic clutch at the wheel

The nose of the machine seemed to leap up before him The wheel pressed his hand with irresistible force, and jerked itself out of his control

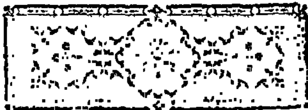
Woodhouse, sitting crouched together, gave a hoarse cry, and sprang up towards Monson "Too far!" he cried and then he was clinging to the gunwale for dear life and Monson had been jerked clean overhead, and was falling backwards upon him

So swiftly had the thing happened that barely a quarter of the people going to and fro in Hyde Park and Brompton Road, and the Exhibition Road saw anything of the aerial catastrophe A distant winged shape had appeared above the clustering houses to the south, had fallen and risen, growing larger as it did so, had swooped swiftly down towards the Imperial Institute, a broad spread of flying wings, had swept round in a quarter circle dashed eastward, and then suddenly sprang vertically into the air A black object shot out of it and came spinning downward A man! Two men clutching each other! They came whirling down separated as they struck the roof of the Students' Club and bounded off into the green bushes on its southward side

For perhaps half a minute, the pointed stem of the big machine still pierced vertically upward, the screw spinning desperately For one brief instant, that yet seemed an age to all who watched, it had hung motionless in mid air Then a spout of yellow flame licked up its length from the stern engine, and swift, swifter swifter, and flaring like a rocket, it rushed down upon the solid mass of masonry which was formerly the Royal College of Science The big screw of white and gold touched the parapet, and crumpled up like wet linen Then the blazing spindle shaped body smashed and splintered, smashing and splintering in its fall, upon the north westward angle of the building

But the crash, the flame of blazing paraffin that shot heavenward from the shattered engines of the machine the crushed horrors that were found in the garden beyond the Students' Club, the masses of yellow parapet and red brick that fell headlong into the roadway, the

running to and fro of people like ants in a broken ant-hill, the galloping of fire-engines, the gathering of crowds—all these things do not belong to this story, which was written only to tell how the first of all successful flying-machines was launched and flew. Though he failed, and failed disastrously, the record of Monson's work remains—a sufficient monument—to guide the next of that band of gallant experimentalists who will sooner or later master this great problem of flying. And between Worcester Park and Malden there still stands that portentous avenue of iron-work, rusting now, and dangerous here and there, to witness to the first desperate struggle for man's right of way through the air.



STORY THE THIRD

The Story of the late Mr. Elvesham

I SET this story down, not expecting it will be believed, but, if possible, to prepare a way of escape for the next victim He perhaps may profit by my misfortune My own case, I know, is hopeless, and I am now in some measure prepared to meet my fate

My name is Edward George Eden I was born at Trentham, in Staffordshire, my father being employed in the gardens there I lost my mother when I was three years old and my father when I was five, my uncle, George Eden, then adopting me as his own son He was a single man, self educated, and well known in Birmingham as an enterprising journalist, he educated me generously, fired my ambition to succeed in the world, and at his death, which happened four years ago, left me his entire fortune, a matter of about five hundred pounds after all outgoing charges were paid. I was then eighteen He advised me in his will to expend the money in completing my education I had already chosen the profession of medicine, and through his posthumous generosity, and my good fortune in a scholarship competition, I became a medical student at

Univers ty College Lon lon At the t ne f the beg n ning of my story I lodged at ɪɪʌ Un e s v S reet in a little upper room, very shabb t hed and dra ghty overlook ng the back of Sh o bre s p e n es I used th s little room both to l ve n and sleep in because I was anxious to eke out my means to the very last shillingsworth

I was taking a pa r of shoes to be men le l at a shop in the Tottenham Court Roa l when I fi st en n ere l the l ttle old man w th the yell w face w h whom my life has no v become so inextr cably entangle l He was stand ng on the kerb and sta ng at the nun ber on the door in a doubtful way as I opened it H s eyes—they were dull grey eyes and red l h n ler l e r ms—fell to my face and h s co n enance ned ately ass med an express on of corrugate l am ab l y

You come he sa d apt to tl e n ment I had forgotten the number of your house Ho v do v u do Mr Eden?

I was a little astonished at his fam ar a ldress for I had never set eyes on l e man bef e I was annoyed too at his catching me w th my boots un er my arm He not ced my lack of cord al ty

Wonder who tl e deuce I am eh? A fr end let me ass re you I have seen yo befo e though you haven t seen me. Is there anywhere wl ere I can talk to you?"

I hes tated The shabbiness of my room pt a rs was not a matter for every stranger "Perhaps sa d I ' We mi ht walk down the street I m unfort nately prevented"— My gesture explained the sentence before I had spoken it

"The very th ng he sa d and faced th s way and then tl at The street? Wh ch way shall we go?" I sl pped my boots down in the passage "Look h re! he sa d abr ptly "this b s ness of m ne is a r gmarole Come and l nch w th me Mr Eden I m an old man a very old man and not g od at explanat ons

tions of his. He left me at the Blavitski portal. I noticed that he drew a handful of gold coins from his pocket when it came to paying for the lunch. His insistence upon bodily health was curious. In accordance with an arrangement we had made I applied that day for a life policy in the Loyal Insurance Company for a large sum, and I was exhaustively overhauled by the medical advisers of that company in the subsequent week. Even that did not satisfy him, and he insisted I must be re-examined by the great Doctor Henderson. It was Friday in Whitsun week before he came to a decision. He called me down quite late in the evening,—nearly nine it was,—from cramming chemical equations for my Preliminary Scientific examination. He was standing in the passage under the feeble gas lamp, and his face was a grotesque interplay of shadows. He seemed more bowed than when I had first seen him, and his cheeks had sunk in a little.

His voice shook with emotion. "Everything is satisfactory, Mr. Eden," he said. "Everything is quite, quite satisfactory. And this night of all nights, you must dine with me and celebrate your—accession." He was interrupted by a cough. "You won't have long to wait, either," he said, wiping his handkerchief across his lips, and gripping my hand with his long bony claw that was disengaged. "Certainly not very long to wait."

We went into the street and called a cab. I remember every incident of that drive vividly, the swift, easy motion, the contrast of gas and oil and electric light, the crowds of people in the streets, the place in Regent Street to which we went, and the sumptuous dinner we were served with there. I was disconcerted at first by the well-dressed waiter's glances at my rough clothes, bothered by the stones of the olives, but as the champagne warmed my blood, my confidence revived. At first the old man talked of himself. He had already told me his name in the cab; he was Egbert Elvesham,

the great philosopher, whose name I had known since I was a lad at school. It seemed incredible to me that this man, whose intelligence had so early dominated mine, this great abstraction, should suddenly realise itself as this decrepit familiar figure. I dare say every young fellow who has suddenly fallen among celebrities has felt something of my disappointment. He told me now of the future that the feeble streams of his life would presently leave dry for me, houses, copyrights, investments; I had never suspected that philosophers were so rich. He watched me drink and eat with a touch of envy. "What a capacity for living you have," he said; and then with a sigh, a sigh of relief I could have thought it, "It will not be long."

"Ay," said I, my head swimming now with champagne; "I have a future perhaps—of a fairly agreeable sort, thanks to you. I shall now have the honour of your name. But you have a past. Such a past as is worth all my future."

He shook his head and smiled, as I thought, with half sad appreciation of my flattering admiration. "That future," he said, "would you in truth change it?" The waiter came with liqueurs. "You will not perhaps mind taking my name, taking my position; but would you indeed—willingly—take my years?"

"With your achievements," said I gallantly.

He smiled again. "Kümmel—both," he said to the waiter, and turned his attention to a little paper packet he had taken from his pocket. "This hour," said he, "this after-dinner hour is the hour of small things. Here is a scrap of my unpublished wisdom." He opened the packet with his shaking yellow fingers, and showed a little pinkish powder on the paper. "This," said he—"well, you must guess what it is. But Kümmel—put but a dash of this powder in it—is Himmel." His large greyish eyes watched mine with an inscrutable expression.

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gave his mind to the flavour of liqueurs However, I feigned a great interest in his weakness, for I was drunk enough for such small sycophancy

He parted the powder between the little glasses, and risin suddenly with a strange unexpected dignity, held out his hand towards me I imitated his action, and the glasses rang "To a quick succession," said he, and raised his glass towards his lips

"Not that," I said hastily "Not that"

He paused, with the liqueur at the level of his chin, and his eyes blazing into mine

"To a long life," said I

He hesitated "To a long life," said he, with a sudden bark of laughter, and with eyes fixed on one another we tilted the little glasses His eyes looked straight into mine, and as I drained the stuff off, I felt a curiously intense sensation The first touch of it set my brain in a furious tumult, I seemed to feel an actual physical stirring in my skull, and a seething humming filled my ears I did not notice the flavour in my mouth the aroma that filled my throat, I saw only the grey intensity of his gaze that burnt into mine The draught, the mental confusion, the noise and stirring in my head, seemed to last an interminable time Curious vague impressions of half-forgotten things danced and vanished on the edge of my consciousness At last he broke the spell With a sudden explosive sigh he put down his glass.

"Well?" he said

"It's glorious," said I, though I had not tasted the stuff

My head was spinning I sat down My brain was chaos Then my perception grew clear and minute as though I saw things in a concave mirror His manner seemed to have changed into something nervous and hasty He pulled out his watch and grimaced at it "Eleven seven! And to night I must—Seven—twenty five Waterloo! I must go at once" He called for

the bill, and struggled with his coat Officious waiters came to our assistance In another moment I was wishing him good bye, over the apron of a cab and still with an absurd feeling of minute distinctness as though —how can I express it?—I not only saw but *felt* through an inverted opera glass

"That stuff," he said He put his hand to his forehead "I ought not to have given it to you It will make your head split to-morrow Wait a minute Here" He handed me out a little flat thing like a seidlitz powder "Take that in water as you are going to bed The other thing was a drug Not till you're ready to go to bed, mind It will clear your head That's all One more shake—Futurus!"

I gripped his shrivelled claw "Good bye," he said, and by the droop of his eyelids I judged he too was a *little under the influence of that brain twisting cordial*

He recollected something else with a start, felt in his breast pocket, and produced another packet, this time a cylinder the size and shape of a shaving stick "Here," said he "I'd almost forgotten Don't open this until I come to-morrow—but take it now"

It was so heavy that I well nigh dropped it "All ri'!" said I, and he grinned at me through the cab window as the cabman flicked his horse into wakefulness It was a white packet he had given me with red seals at either end and along its edge "If this isn't *money*," *said I*, "*it's platinum or lead*"

I stuck it with elaborate care into my pocket, and with a whirling brain walked home through the Regent Street loiterers and the dark back streets beyond Portland Road I remember the sensations of that walk very [illegible] strange as they were I was still so far myself

[illegible]

of my mental strangeness—mental doubling vaguely expresses it As I was walking up Regent Street I found

in my mind a queer persuasion that it was Waterloo station, and had an odd impulse to get into the Polytechnic as a man might get into a train I put a knuckle in my eye and it was Regent Street How can I express it? You see a skilful actor looking quietly at you, he pulls a grimace, and lo!—another person Is it too extravagant if I tell you that it seemed to me as if Regent Street had, for the moment, done that? Then, being persuaded it was Regent Street again, I was oddly muddled about some fantastic reminiscences that cropped up "Thirty years ago," thought I, "it was here that I quarrelled with my brother" Then I burst out laughing to the astonishment and encouragement of a group of night prowlers Thirty years ago I did not exist and never in my life had I boasted a brother The stuff was surely liquid folly, for the poignant regret for that lost brother still clung to me Along Portland Road the madness took another turn I began to recall vanished shops, and to compare the street with what it used to be Confused, troubled thinking was comprehensible enough after the drink I had taken, but what puzzled me were these curiously vivid phantasmal memories that had crept into my mind, and not only the memories that had crept in, but also the memories that had slipped out I stopped opposite Stevens', the natural history dealer's, and cudgelled my brains to think what he had to do with me A 'bus went by, and sounded exactly like the rumbling of a train I seemed to be dipped into some dark, remote pit for the recollection "Of course," said I, at last, "he has promised me three frogs to-morrow Odd I should have forgotten"

Do they still show children dissolving views? In those I remember one view would begin like a faint ghost, and grow and oust another In just that way it seemed to me that a ghostly set of new sensations was struggling with those of my ordinary self

I went on through Euston Road to Tottenham Court

Road, puzzled, and a little frightened, and scarcely noticed the unusual way I was taking, for commonly I used to cut through the intervening network of back streets I turned into University Street, to discover that I had forgotten my number Only by a strong effort did I recall 11A, and even then it seemed to me that it was a thing some forgotten person had told me I tried to steady my mind by recalling the incidents of the dinner, and for the life of me I could conjure up no picture of my host's face, I saw him only as a shadowy outline, as one might see oneself reflected in a window through which one was looking In his place, however, I had a curious exterior vision of myself sitting at a table, flushed, bright eyed, and talkative

"I must take this other powder," said I "This is getting *impossible*"

I tried the wrong side of the hall for my candle and the matches, and had a doubt of which landing my room might be on "I'm drunk," I said, 'that's certain," and blundered needlessly on the staircase to sustain the proposition

At the first glance my room seemed unfamiliar "What rot!" I said, and stared about me I seemed to bring myself back by the effort and the odd phantasmal quality passed into the concrete familiar There was the old looking glass, with my notes on the albumens stuck in the corner of the frame, my old everyday suit of clothes pitched about the floor And yet it was not so real after all I felt an idiotic persuasion trying to creep into my mind, as it were, that I was in a railway carriage in a train just stopping, that I was peering out of the window at some unknown station I gripped the bed rail firmly to reassure myself "It's clairvoyance, perhaps," I said "I must write to the Psychical Research Society"

I put the rouleau on my dressing table, sat on my bed and began to take off my boots It was as if the

picture of my present sensations was painted over some other picture that was trying to show through "Curse it!" said I, "my wits are going, or am I in two places at once?" Half undressed, I tossed the powder into a glass and drank it off It effervesced, and became a fluorescent amber colour Before I was in bed my mind was already tranquillised I felt the pillow at my cheek, and thereupon I must have fallen asleep

I awoke abruptly out of a dream of strange beasts, and found myself lying on my back Probably everyone knows that dismal emotional dream from which one escapes, awake indeed but strangely cowed There was a curious taste in my mouth, a tired feeling in my limbs, a sense of cutaneous discomfort I lay with my head motionless on my pillow, expecting that my feeling of strangeness and terror would probably pass away, and that I should then doze off again to sleep But instead of that, my uncanny sensations increased At first I could perceive nothing wrong about me There was a faint light in the room, so faint that it was the very next thing to darkness, and the furniture stood out in it as vague blots of absolute darkness I stared with my eyes just over the bedclothes

It came into my mind that someone had entered the room to rob me of my rouleau of money, but after lying for some moments, breathing regularly to simulate sleep, I realised this was mere fancy Nevertheless, the uneasy assurance of something wrong kept fast hold of me With an effort I raised my head from the pillow, and peered about me at the dark What it was I could not conceive I looked at the dim shapes around me, the greater and lesser darknesses that indicated curtains, table, fireplace, bookshelves, and so forth Then I began to perceive something unfamiliar in the forms of the darkness Had the bed turned round? Yonder should be the bookshelves, and something shrouded and pallid rose there, something that would not answer to

the bookshelves, however I looked at it It was far too big to be my shirt thrown on a chair

Overcoming a childish terror, I threw back the bedclothes and thrust my leg out of bed Instead of coming out of my truckle bed upon the floor I found my foot scarcely reached the edge of the mattress I made another step, as it were, and sat up on the edge of the bed By the side of my bed should be the candle, and the matches upon the broken chair I put out my hand and touched—nothing I waved my hand in the darkness, and it came against some heavy hanging, soft and thick in texture, which gave a rustling noise at my touch I grasped this and pulled it, it appeared to be a curtain suspended over the head of my bed

I was now thoroughly awake, and beginning to realise that I was in a strange room I was puzzled I tried to recall the overnight circumstances, and I found them now, curiously enough, vivid in my memory the supper, my reception of the little packages my wonder whether I was intoxicated, my slow undressing, the coolness to my flushed face of my pillow I felt a sudden distrust Was that last night, or the night before? At anyrate, this room was strange to me, and I could not imagine how I had got into it The dim, pallid outline was growing paler, and I perceived it was a window, with the dark shape of an oval toilet glass against the weak intimation of the dawn that filtered through the blind I stood up, and was surprised by a curious feeling of weakness and unsteadiness With trembling hands outstretched, I walked slowly towards the window, getting, nevertheless, a bruise on the knee from a chair by the way I fumbled round the glass, which was large, with handsome brass sconces to find the blind cord I could not find any By chance I took hold of the tassel, and with the click of a spring the blind ran up

I found myself looking out upon a scene that was altogether strange to me The night was overcast, and

through the flocculent grey of the heaped clouds there filtered a faint half light of dawn Just at the edge of the sky, the cloud canopy had a blood red rim Below, everything was dark and indistinct, dim hills in the distance, a vague mass of buildings running up into pinnacles, trees like spilt ink, and below the window a tracery of black bushes and pale grey paths It was so unfamiliar that for the moment I thought myself still dreaming I felt the toilet table, it appeared to be made of some polished wood, and was rather elaborately furnished—there were little cut glass bottles and a brush upon it There was also a queer little object, horse shoe shaped it felt, with smooth, hard projections, lying in a saucer I could find no matches nor candle stick

I turned my eyes to the room again Now the blind was up, faint spectres of its furnishing came out of the darkness There was a huge curtained bed, and the fireplace at its foot had a large white mantel with something of the shimmer of marble

I leant against the toilet table, shut my eyes and opened them again, and tried to think The whole thing was far too real for dreaming I was inclined to imagine there was still some hiatus in my memory as a consequence of my draught of that strange liqueur, that I had come into my inheritance perhaps, and suddenly lost my recollection of everything since my good fortune had been announced Perhaps if I waited a little, things would be clearer to me again Yet my dinner with old Elvesham was now singularly vivid and recent The champagne, the observant waiters, the powder, and the liqueurs—I could have staked my soul it all happened a few hours ago

And then occurred a thing so trivial and yet so terrible to me that I shiver now to think of that moment I spoke aloud I said, "How the devil did I get here?" . *And the voice was not my own*

It was not my own, it was thin, the articulation

was slurred, the resonance of my facial bones was different Then to reassure myself I ran one hand over the other, and felt loose folds of skin the bony laxity of age "Surely," I said in that horrible voice that had somehow established itself in my throat, "surely this thing is a dream!" Almost as quickly as if I did it involuntarily, I thrust my fingers into my mouth My teeth had gone My finger tips ran on the flaccid surface of an even row of shrivelled gums I was sick with dismay and disgust

I felt then a passionate desire to see myself, to realise at once in its full horror the ghastly change that had come upon me I tottered to the mantel and felt along it for matches As I did so, a barking cough sprang up in my throat, and I clutched the thick flannel nightdress I found about me There were no matches there, and I suddenly realised that my extremities were cold Sniffing and coughing, whimpering a little perhaps, I fumbled back to bed It is surely a dream," I whimpered to myself as I clambered back, "surely a dream' It was a senile repetition I pulled the bed clothes over my shoulders, over my ears I thrust my withered hand under the pillow, and determined to compose myself to sleep Of course it was a dream In the morning the dream would be over, and I should wake up strong and vigorous again to my youth and studies I shut my eyes, breathed regularly, and finding myself wakeful, began to count slowly through the powers of three

But the thing I desired would not come I could not get to sleep And the persuasion of the inexorable eality of the change that had happened to me grew steadily Presently I found myself with my eyes wide open, the powers of three forgotten, and my skinny fingers upon my shrivelled gums I was indeed, suddenly and abruptly, an old man I had in some unaccountable manner fallen through my life and come to old age, in some way I had been cheated of all the

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I turned my eyes to the room again Now the blind was up, faint spectres of its furnishing came out of the darkness There was a huge curtained bed, and the fireplace at its foot had a large white mantel with something of the shimmer of marble

I leant against the toilet table, shut my eyes and opened them again, and tried to think The whole thing was far too real for dreaming I was inclined to imagine there was still some hiatus in my memory as a consequence of my draught of that strange liqueur, that I had come into my inheritance perhaps, and suddenly lost my recollection of everything since my good fortune had been announced Perhaps if I waited a little, things would be clearer to me again Yet my dinner with old Elvesham was now singularly vivid and recent The champagne, the observant waiters, the powder, and the liqueurs—I could have staked my soul it all happened a few hours ago

And then occurred a thing so trivial and yet so terrible to me that I shiver now to think of that moment I spoke aloud I said, "How the devil did I get here?" *And the voice was not my own*

It was not my own, it was thin, the articulation

body of my strength that is and my future But how to prove it? Then as I thought the thing became so incredible even to me that my mind reeled and I had to pinch myself to feel my toothless gums to see myself in the glass and touch the things about me before I could steady myself to face the facts again Was all life hallucination? Was I indeed Elvesham and he me? Had I been dreaming of Eden overnight? Was there any Eden? But if I was Elvesham I should remember where I was on the previous morning the name of the town in which I lived what happened before the dream began I struggled with my thoughts I recalled the queer doubleness of my memories overnight But now my mind was clear Not the ghost of any memories but those proper to Eden could I raise

This way lies insanity I cried in my piping voice I staggered to my feet dragged my feeble heavy limbs to the washhand stand and plunged my grey head into a basin of cold water Then towelling myself I tried again It was no good I felt beyond all question that I was indeed Eden not Elvesham But Eden in Elvesham's body

Had I been a man of any other age I might have given myself up to my fate as one enchanted But in these sceptical days miracles do not pass current Here was some trick of psychology What a drug and a steady stare could do a drug and a steady stare or some similar treatment could surely undo Men have lost their memories before But to exchange memories as one does umbrellas! I laughed Alas not a healthy laugh but a wheezing senile titter I could have fancied old Elvesham laughing at my plight and a gust of petulant anger unusual to me swept across my feelings I began dressing eagerly in the clothes I found lying about on the floor and only realised when I was dressed that it was an evening suit I had assumed I opened the wardrobe and found some ordinary clothes a pair of plaid trousers and an old fashioned

dressing gown I put a venerable smoking cap on my venerable head, and, coughing a little from my exertions, tottered out upon the landing

It was then perhaps a quarter to six, and the blinds were closely drawn and the house quite silent The landing was a spacious one, a broad, richly carpeted staircase went down into the darkness of the hall below, and before me a door ajar showed me a writing desk, a revolving bookcase, the back of a study chair, and a fine array of bound books shelf upon shelf

"My study," I mumbled, and walked across the landing Then at the sound of my voice a thought struck me, and I went back to the bedroom and put in the set of false teeth They slipped in with the ease of old habit "That's better," said I, gnashing them, and so returned to the study

The drawers of the writing desk were locked Its revolving top was also locked I could see no indications of the keys, and there were none in the pockets of my trousers I shuffled back at once to the bedroom, and went through the dress suit, and afterwards the pockets of all the garments I could find I was very eager and one might have imagined that burglars had been at work, to see my room when I had done Not only were there no keys to be found, but not a coin, nor a scrap of paper—save only the receipted bill of the overnight dinner

A curious weariness asserted itself I sat down and stared at the garments flung here and there, their pockets turned inside out My first frenzy had already flickered out Every moment I was beginning to realise the immense intelligence of the plans of my enemy, to see more and more clearly the hopelessness of my position With an effort I rose and hurried into the study again On the staircase was a housemaid pulling up the blinds She stared I think, at the expression of my face I shut the door of the study behind me, and, seizing a poker, began an attack upon the desk

That is how they found me The cover of the desk was split, the lock smashed, the letters torn out of the pigeon holes and tossed about the room In my senile rage I had flung about the pens and other such light stationery, and overturned the ink Moreover a large vase upon the mantel had got broken—I do not know how I could find no cheque book, no money, no indications of the slightest use for the recovery of my body I was battering madly at the drawers, when the butler, backed by two women servants, intruded upon me

That simply is the story of my change No one will believe my *frantic* assertions I am treated as one demented, and even at this moment I am under restraint But I am sane, absolutely sane, and to prove it I have sat down to write this story minutely as the thing happened to me I appeal to the reader, whether there is any trace of insanity in the style or method of the story he has been reading I am a young man locked away in an old man's body But the clear fact is incredible to everyone Naturally I appear demented to those who will not believe this naturally I do not know the names of my secretaries, of the doctors who come to see me, of my servants and neighbours, of this town (wherever it is) where I find myself Naturally I lose myself in my own house, and suffer inconveniences of every sort Naturally I ask the oddest questions Naturally I weep and cry out, and have paroxysms of despair I have no money and no [illegible]

that I have taken an account in some part of London It seems that Elvesham kept the name of his solicitor secret from all his household—I can ascertain nothing

Elvesham was, of course, a profound student of mental science, and all my declarations of the facts of the case merely confirm the theory that my insanity is the outcome of overmuch brooding upon psychology. Dreams of the personal identity indeed! Two days ago I was a healthy youngster, with all life before me, now I am a furious old man, unkempt and desperate and miserable, prowling about a great luxurious strange house, watched, feared, and avoided as a lunatic by everyone about me. And in London is Elvesham beginning life again in a vigorous body, and with all the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of threescore and ten. He has stolen my life.

What has happened I do not clearly know. In the study are volumes of manuscript notes referring chiefly to the psychology of memory, and parts of what may be either calculations or ciphers in symbols absolutely strange to me. In some passages there are indications that he was also occupied with the philosophy of mathematics. I take it he has transferred the whole of his memories, the accumulation that makes up his personality, from this old withered brain of his to mine, and similarly that he has transferred mine to his discarded tenement. Practically, that is, he has changed bodies. But how such a change may be possible is without the range of my philosophy. I have been a materialist for all my thinking life, but here, suddenly, is a clear case of man's detachability from matter.

One desperate experiment I am about to try. I sit writing here before putting the matter to issue. This morning, with the help of a table-knife that I had secreted at breakfast, I succeeded in breaking open a fairly obvious secret drawer in this wrecked writing-desk. I discovered nothing save a little green glass phial containing a white powder. Round the neck of the phial was a label, and thereon was written this one word, "*Release*." This may be—is most probably, poison. I can understand Elvesham placing poison in my way, and

I should be sure that it was his intention so to get rid of the only living witness against him, were it not for this careful concealment The man has practically solved the problem of immortality Save for the spite of chance, he will live in my body until it has aged, and then, again, throwing that aside he will assume some other victim's youth and strength When one remembers his heartlessness, it is terrible to think of the ever growing experience that How long has he been leaping from body to body? But I tire of writing The powder appears to be soluble in water The taste is not unpleasant

There the narrative found upon Mr Elvesham's desk ends His dead body lay between the desk and the chair The latter had been pushed back probably by his last convulsions The story was written in pencil, and in a crazy hand quite unlike his usual minute characters There remain only two curious facts to record Indisputably there was some connection between Eden and Elvesham since the whole of Elvesham's property was bequeathed to the young man But *he never inherited* When Elvesham committed suicide, Eden was, strangely enough already dead Twenty-four hours before, he had been knocked down by a cab and killed instantly, at the crowded crossing at the intersection of Gower Street and Euston Road So that the only human being who could have thrown light upon this fantastic narrative is beyond the reach of questions

STORY THE FOURTH

In the Abyss

THE lieutenant stood in front of the steel sphere and gnawed a piece of pine splinter "What do you think of it, Steevens?" he asked

"It s an idea," said Steevens, in the tone of one who keeps an open mind

"I believe it will smash—flat," said the lieutenant

"He seems to have calculated it all out pretty well,' said Steevens still impartial

"But think of the pressure," said the lieutenant "At the surface of the water it's fourteen pounds to the inch, thirty feet down it's double that, sixty, treble, ninety, four times, nine hundred, forty times, five thousand, three hundred—that's a mile—it's two hundred and forty times fourteen pounds, that's—let's see—thirty hundredweight—a ton and a half, Steevens, *a ton and a half* to the square inch And the ocean where he's going is five miles deep That's seven and a half"—

"Sounds a lot," said Steevens, "but it's jolly thick steel '

The lieutenant made no answer, but resumed his pine splinter The object of their conversation was a huge ball of steel, having an exterior diameter of perhaps nine feet It looked like the shot for some Titanic piece of artillery It was elaborately nested in a monstrous scaffolding built into the framework of the vessel, and the gigantic spars that were presently to sling it overboard gave the stern of the ship an appearance that had raised the curiosity of every decent sailor who had sighted it, from the Pool of London to the Tropic of Capricorn In two places, one above the other, the steel gave place to a couple of circular windows of enormously thick glass, and one of these, set in a steel frame of great solidity, was now partially unscrewed Both the men had seen the interior of this globe for the first time that morning It was elaborately padded with air cushions, with little studs sunk between bulging pillows to work the simple mechanism of the affair Everything was elaborately padded, even the Myers apparatus which was to absorb carbonic acid and replace the oxygen inspired by its tenant, when he had crept in by the glass manhole, and had been screwed in It was so elaborately padded that a man might have been fired from a gun in it with perfect safety And it had need to be, for presently a man was to crawl in through that glass manhole, to be screwed up tightly, and to be flung overboard, and to sink down—down—down, for five miles, even as the lieutenant said It had taken the strongest hold of his imagination, it made him a bore at mess, and he found Steevens, the new arrival aboard, a godsend to talk to about it, over and over again

"It's my opinion," said the lieutenant, "that that glass will sim [illegible]
pressure of t [illegible]
water under [illegible]

"If the [illegible],
then?"

"The water would shoot in like a jet of iron Have you ever felt a straight jet of high pressure water? It would hit as hard as a bullet It would simply smash him and flatten him It would tear down his throat, and into his lungs, it would blow in his ears"—

"What a detailed imagination you have!" protested Steevens who saw things vividly

"It's a simple statement of the inevitable," said the lieutenant

"And the globe?"

"Would just give out a few little bubbles, and it would settle down comfortably against the day of judgment, among the oozes and the bottom clay—with poor Elstead spread over his own smashed cushions like butter over bread"

He repeated this sentence as though he liked it very much 'Like butter over bread' he said

"Having a look at the jigger?" said a voice, and Elstead stood behind them spick and span in white, with a cigarette between his teeth, and his eyes smiling out of the shadow of his ample hat brim "What's that about bread and butter, Weybridge? Grumbling as usual about the insufficient pay of naval officers? It won't be more than a day now before I start We are to get the slings ready to day This clean sky and gentle swell is just the kind of thing for swinging off a dozen tons of lead and iron, isn't it?"

"It won't affect you much,' said Weybridge

"No Seventy or eighty feet down, and I shall be there in a dozen seconds, there's not a particle moving, though the wind shriek itself hoarse up above and the water lifts halfway to the clouds No Down there"—

He moved to the side of the ship and the other two followed him All three leant forward on their elbows and stared down into the yellow green water

"*Peace*" said Elstead, finishing his thought aloud

"Are you dead certain that clockwork will act?" asked Weybridge presently

"It has worked thirty-five times," said Elstead. "It's bound to work."

"But if it doesn't?"

"Why shouldn't it?"

"I wouldn't go down in that confounded thing," said Weybridge, "for twenty thousand pounds."

"Cheerful chap you are," said Elstead, and spat sociably at a bubble below.

"I don't understand yet how you mean to work the thing," said Steevens.

"In the first place, I'm screwed into the sphere," said Elstead, "and when I've turned the electric light off and on three times to show I'm cheerful, I'm swung out over the stern by that crane, with all those big lead sinkers slung below me. The top lead weight has a roller carrying a hundred fathoms of strong cord rolled up, *and that's all that joins the sinkers to the sphere*, except the slings that will be cut when the affair is dropped. We use cord rather than wire rope because it's easier to cut and more buoyant—necessary points, as you will see.

"Through each of these lead weights you notice there is a hole, and an iron rod will be run through that and will project six feet on the lower side. If that rod is rammed up from below, it knocks up a lever and sets the clockwork in motion at the side of the cylinder on which the cord winds.

"Very well. The whole affair is lowered gently into the water, and the slings are cut. The sphere floats,—with the air in it, it's lighter than water,—but the lead weights go down straight and the cord runs out. When the cord is all paid out, the sphere will go down too, pulled down by the cord."

"But why the cord?" asked Steevens. "Why not fasten the weights directly to the sphere?"

"Because of the smash down below. The whole affair will go rushing down, mile after mile, at a headlong pace at last. It would be knocked to pieces on

the bottom if it wasn't for that cord But the weights will hit the bottom, and directly they do, the buoyancy of the sphere will come into play It will go on sinking slower and slower come to a stop at last and then begin to float upward again

'That's where the clockwork comes in Directly the weights smash against the sea bottom, the rod will be knocked through and will kick up the clockwork, and the cord will be rewound on the reel I shall be lugged down to the sea bottom There I shall stay for half an hour, with the electric light on, looking about me Then the clockwork will release a spring knife, the cord will be cut, and up I shall rush again, like a soda water bubble The cord itself will help the flotation"

"And if you should chance to hit a ship? said Weybridge

"I should come up at such a pace, I should go clean through it," said Elstead, 'like a cannon ball You needn't worry about that"

"And suppose some nimble crustacean should wriggle into your clockwork"—

"It would be a pressing sort of invitation for me to stop" said Elstead turning his back on the water and staring at the sphere

They had swung Elstead overboard by eleven o'clock The day was serenely bright and calm, with the horizon lost in haze The electric glare in the little upper compartment beamed cheerfully three times Then they let him down slowly to the surface of the water, and a sailor in the stern chains hung ready to cut the tackle [illegible] The [illegible] d the [illegible] ship [illegible] floated uppermost, seemed like eyes turned up in round wonderment at the people who crowded the rail A voice

wondered how Elstead liked the rolling "Are you ready?" sang out the commander "Ay, ay, sir!" "Then let her go!"

The rope of the tackle tightened against the blade and was cut, and an eddy rolled over the globe in a grotesquely helpless fashion Someone waved a handkerchief, someone else tried an ineffectual cheer, a middy was counting slowly, "Eight, nine, ten!" Another roll, then with a jerk and a splash the thing righted itself

It seemed to be stationary for a moment, to grow rapidly smaller, and then the water closed over it, and it became visible, enlarged by refraction and dimmer, below the surface Before one could count three it had disappeared There was a flicker of white light far down in the water, that diminished to a speck and vanished Then there was nothing but a depth of water going down into blackness, through which a shark was swimming

Then suddenly the screw of the cruiser began to rotate, the water was crickled the shark disappeared in a wrinkled confusion, and a torrent of foam rushed across the crystalline clearness that had swallowed up Elstead "What's the idee?" said one A B to another

"We're going to lay off about a couple of miles, 'fear he should hit us when he comes up," said his mate

The ship steamed slowly to her new position Aboard her almost everyone who was unoccupied remained watching the breathing swell into which the sphere had sunk For the next half hour it is doubtful if a word was spoken that did not bear directly or indirectly on Elstead The December sun was now high in the sky and the heat very considerable

"He'll be cold enough down there," said Weybridge "They say that below a certain depth sea water's always just about freezing"

"Where'll he come up?" asked Steevens "I've lost my bearings"

"That's the spot," said the commander who prided

himself on his omniscience He extended a precise finger south eastward "And this, I reckon, is pretty n - moment," he said "He's been thirty five minutes"

w long does it take to reach the bottom of the ocean?" asked Steevens

For a depth of five miles, and reckoning—as we did—an acceleration of two feet per second, both ways, is just about three quarters of a minute"

"Then he's overdue," said Weybridge

"Pretty nearly," said the commander. "I suppose it takes a few minutes for that cord of his to wind in"

"I forgot that," said Weybridge, evidently relieved

And then began the suspense A minute slowly dragged itself out, and no sphere shot out of the water Another followed, and nothing broke the low oily swell The sailors explained to one another that little point about the winding in of the cord The rigging was dotted with expectant faces "Come up, Elstead!" called one hairy chested salt impatiently, and the others caught it up and shouted as though they were waiting for the curtain of a theatre to rise

The commander glanced irritably at them

"Of course, if the acceleration's less than two," he said "he'll be all the longer We aren't absolutely certain that was the proper figure I'm no slavish believer in calculations"

Steevens agreed concisely No one on the quarter deck spoke for a couple of minutes Then Steevens' watchcase clicked

When, twenty one minutes after, the sun reached the zenith they were still waiting for the globe to reappear, and not a man aboard had dared to whisper that hope was dead It was Weybridge who first gave expression to that realisation He spoke while the sound of eight bells still hung in the air "I always distrusted that window," he said quite suddenly to Steevens

"Good God!" said Steevens. "You don't think—?"

"Well!" said Weybridge, and left the rest to his imagination.

"I'm no great believer in calculations myself," said the commander dubiously, "so that I'm not altogether hopeless yet." And at midnight the gunboat was steaming slowly in a spiral round the spot where the globe had sunk, and the white beam of the electric light fled and halted and swept discontentedly onward again over the waste of phosphorescent waters under the little stars.

"If his window hasn't burst and smashed him," said Weybridge, "then it's a cursed sight worse, for his clockwork has gone wrong, and he's alive now, five miles under our feet, down there in the cold and dark, anchored in that little bubble of his, where never a ray of light has shone or a human being lived, since the waters were gathered together. He's there without food, feeling hungry and thirsty and scared, wondering whether he'll starve or stifle. Which will it be? The Myers apparatus is running out, I suppose. How long do they last?"

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed; "what little things we are! What daring little devils! Down there, miles and miles of water—all water, and all this empty water about us and this sky. Gulfs!" He threw his hands out, and as he did so, a little white streak swept noiselessly up the sky, travelled more slowly, stopped, became a motionless dot, as though a new star had fallen up into the sky. Then it went sliding back again and lost itself amidst the reflections of the stars and the white haze of the sea's phosphorescence.

At the sight he stopped, arm extended and mouth open. He shut his mouth, opened it again, and waved his arms with an impatient gesture. Then he turned, shouted "Elstead ahoy!" to the first watch, and went at a run to Lindley and the search-light. "I saw him," he said. "Starboard there! His light's on, and he's just shot out of the water. Bring the light round

We ought to see him drifting, when he lifts on the swell '

But they never picked up the explorer until dawn. Then they almost ran him down The crane was swung out and a boat's crew hooked the chain to the sphere When they had shipped the sphere, they unscrewed the manhole and peered into the darkness of the interior (for the electric light chamber was intended to illuminate the water about the sphere, and was shut off entirely from its general cavity)

The air was very hot within the cavity, and the indiarubber at the lip of the manhole was soft There was no answer to their eager questions and no sound of movement within Elstead seemed to be lying motionless, crumpled up in the bottom of the globe The ship's doctor crawled in and lifted him out to the men outside For a moment or so they did not know whether Elstead was alive or dead His face, in the yellow light of the ship's lamps, glistened with perspiration They carried him down to his own cabin

He was not dead, they found, but in a state of absolute nervous collapse, and besides cruelly bruised For some days he had to lie perfectly still It was a week before he could tell his experiences

Almost his first words were that he was going down again The sphere would have to be altered, he said, in order to allow him to throw off the cord if need be, and that was all He had had the most marvellous experience "You thought I should find nothing but ooze," he said "You laughed at my explorations, and I've discovered a new world!" He told his story in disconnected fragments, and chiefly from the wrong end, so that it is impossible to re tell it in his words But what follows is the narrative of his experience

It began atrociously, he said Before the cord ran out, the thing kept rolling over He felt like a frog in a football He could see nothing but the crane and he sky overhead, with an occasional glimpse of the

people on the ship's rail He couldn't tell a bit which way the thing would roll next Suddenly he would find his feet going up, and try to step, and over he went rolling, head over heels, and just anyhow, on the padding Any other shape would have been more comfortable, but no other shape was to be relied upon under the huge pressure of the nethermost abyss

Suddenly the swaying ceased, the globe righted, and when he had picked himself up he saw the water all about him greeny blue, with an attenuated light filtering down from above, and a shoal of little floating things went rushing up past him, as it seemed to him towards the light And even as he looked, it grew darker and darker, until the water above was as dark as the midnight sky, albeit of a greener shade and the water below black And little transparent things in the water developed a faint glint of luminosity, and shot past him in faint greenish streaks

And the feeling of falling! It was just like the start of a lift, he said, only it kept on One has to imagine what that means that keeping on It was then of all times that Elstead repented of his adventure He saw the chances against him in an altogether new light He thought of the big cuttle fish people knew to exist in the middle waters, the kind of things they find half digested in whales at times, or floating dead and rotten and half eaten by fish Suppose one caught hold and wouldn't let go And had the clockwork really been sufficiently tested? But whether he wanted to go on or to go back mattered not the slightest now

In fifty seconds everything was as black as night outside, except where the beam from his light struck through the waters, and picked out every now and then some fish or scrap of sinking matter They flashed by too fast for him to see what they were Once he thinks he passed a shark And then the sphere began to get hot by friction against the water They had underestimated this, it seems

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heads, vast eyes, and dwindling bodies and tails. Their eyes were turned towards him, and he judged they were following him down. He supposed they were attracted by his glare.

Presently others of the same sort joined them. As he went on down, he noticed that the water became of a pallid colour, and that little specks twinkled in his ray like motes in a sunbeam. This was probably due to the clouds of ooze and mud that the impact of his leaden sinkers had disturbed.

By the time he was drawn down to the lead weights he was in a dense fog of white that his electric light failed altogether to pierce for more than a few yards, and many minutes elapsed before the hanging sheets of sediment subsided to any extent. Then, lit by his light and by the transient phosphorescence of a distant shoal of fishes, he was able to see under the huge blackness of the super incumbent water an undulating expanse of greyish white ooze, broken here and there by tangled thickets of a growth of sea lilies, waving hungry tentacles in the air.

Farther away were the graceful, translucent outlines of a group of gigantic sponges. About this floor there were scattered a number of bristling flattish tufts of rich purple and black, which he decided must be some sort of sea urchin, and small, large-eyed or blind things having a curious resemblance, some to woodlice, and others to lobsters, crawled sluggishly across the track of the light and vanished into the obscurity again, leaving furrowed trails behind them.

Then suddenly the hovering swarm of little fishes veered about and came towards him as a flight of starlings might do. They passed over him like a phosphorescent snow, and then he saw behind them some larger creature advancing towards the sphere.

At first he could see it only dimly, a faintly moving figure remotely suggestive of a walking man, and then it came into the spray of light that the lamp shot out

As the glare struck it, it shut its eyes, dazzled He stared in rigid astonishment

It was a strange vertebrated animal Its dark purple head was dimly suggestive of a chameleon, but it had such a high forehead and such a braincase as no reptile ever displayed before, the vertical pitch of its face gave it a most extraordinary resemblance to a human being

Two large and protruding eyes projected from sockets in chameleon fashion, and it had a broad reptilian mouth with horny lips beneath its little nostrils In the position of the ears were two huge gill covers, and out of these floated a branching tree of coralline filaments, almost like the tree like gills that very young rays and sharks possess

But the humanity of the face was not the most extraordinary thing about the creature It was a biped, its almost globular body was poised on a tripod of two frog like legs and a long thick tail, and its fore limbs, which grotesquely caricatured the human hand, much as a frog s do, carried a long shaft of bone, tipped with copper The colour of the creature was variegated its head, hands, and legs were purple, but its skin, which hung loosely upon it, even as clothes might do, was a phosphorescent grey And it stood there blinded by the light

At last this unknown creature of the abyss blinked its eyes open, and, shading them with its disengaged hand, opened its mouth and gave vent to a shouting noise, articulate almost as speech might be, that penetrated even the steel case and padded jacket of the sphere How a shouting may be accomplished without lungs Elstead does not profess to explain It then moved sideways out of the glare into the mystery of shadow that bordered it on either side, and Elstead felt rather than saw that it was coming towards him Fancying the light had attracted it, he turned the switch that cut off the . In another moment

something soft dabbed upon the steel, and the globe swayed

Then the shouting was repeated, and it seemed to him that a distant echo answered it The dabbing recurred, and the globe swayed and ground against the spindle over which the wire was rolled He stood in the blackness and peered out into the everlasting night of the abyss And presently he saw very faint and remote, other phosphorescent quasi human forms hurrying towards him

Hardly knowing what he did, he felt about in his swaying prison for the stud of the exterior electric light, and came by accident against his own small glow lamp in its padded recess The sphere twisted and then threw him down, he heard shouts like shouts of surprise, and when he rose to his feet, he saw two pairs of stalked eyes peering into the lower window and reflecting his ligh

In another moment hands were dabbing vigorously at his steel casing, and there was a sound horrible enough in his position, of the metal protection of the clockwork being vigorously hammered That indeed, sent his heart into his mouth, for if these strange creatures succeeded in stopping that, his release would never occur Scarcely had he thought as much when he felt the sphere sway violently, and the floor of it press hard against his feet He turned off the small glow lamp that lit the interior, and sent the ray of the large light in the separate compartment out into the water The sea floor and the man like creatures had disappeared, and a couple of fish chasing each other dropped suddenly by the window

He thought at once that these strange denizens of the deep sea had broken the rope and that he had escaped He drove up faster and faster, and then stopped with a jerk that sent him flying against the padded roof of his prison For half a minute, perhaps, he was too astonished to think

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It was a strange vertebrated animal Its dark purple head was dimly suggestive of a chameleon, but it had such a high forehead and such a braincase as no reptile ever displayed before, the vertical pitch of its face gave it a most extraordinary resemblance to a human being

Two large and protruding eyes projected from sockets in chameleon fashion, and it had a broad reptilian mouth with horny lips beneath its little nostrils In the position of the ears were two huge gill covers, and out of these floated a branching tree of coralline filaments, almost like the tree like gills that very young rays and sharks possess

But the humanity of the face was not the most extraordinary thing about the creature It was a biped, its almost globular body was poised on a tripod of two frog like legs and a long thick tail, and its fore limbs, which grotesquely caricatured the human hand much as a frog s do, carried a long shaft of bone, tipped with copper The colour of the creature was variegated, its head, hands, and legs were purple, but its skin, which hung loosely upon it, even as clothes might do, was a phosphorescent grey And it stood there blinded by the light

At last this unknown creature of the abyss blinked its eyes open, and, shading them with its disengaged hand, opened its mouth and gave vent to a shouting noise, articulate almost as speech might be, that penetrated even the steel case and padded jacket of the sphere How a shouting may be accomplished without lungs Elstead does not profess to explain It then moved sideways out of the glare into the mystery of shadow that bordered it on either side, and Elstead felt rather than saw that it was coming towards him Fancying the light had attracted it, he turned the switch that cut off the current In another moment

open spaces of the place he could see a stirring movement as of crowds of people, but he was t nany fathoms above them to distinguish the individ als in those crowds

Then slowly they pulled him down and as they did so, the details of the place crept slowly upon his apprehension He saw that the courses of the cloudy buildings were marked out with beaded lines of ro nd objects, and then he perceived that at several points below him, in broad open spaces, were forms like the encrusted shapes of ships

Slowly and surely he was drawn down, and the forms below him became brighter clearer, more distinct He was being pul ed down, he perceived, towards the large building in the centre of the town, and he could catch a glimpse ever and again of the multitudinous forms that were hugging at his cord He was astonished to see that the rigging of one of the ships, which formed such a prominent feature of the place, was crowded with a host of gesticulating figures regarding him, and then the walls of the great building rose about him silently, and hid the city from his eyes

And such walls they were, of water logged wood, and twisted wire rope, and iron spars and copper, and the bones and skulls of dead men The skulls ran in zigzag lines and spirals and fantastic curves over the building, and in and o t of the r eye sockets and over the whole surface of the place, lurked and played a multitude of silvery little f sl es

Suddenly his ears were filled with a low shouting and a noise like the violent blowing of horns and this gave place to a fantastic chant Down the sphere sank, past the huge pointed windows, through which he saw vaguely a great number of these strange, ghostlike people regarding him, and at last he came to rest, as it seemed, on a kind of altar that stood in the centre of the place

And now he was at such a level that he could see these strange people of the abyss plainly once more To his astonishment, he perceived that they were prostrating themselves before him, all save one, dressed as it seemed in a robe of placoid scales, and crowned with a luminous diadem, who stood with his reptilian mouth opening and shutting, as though he led the chanting of the worshippers

A curious impulse made Elstead turn on his small glow lamp again, so that he became visible to these creatures of the abyss, albeit the glare made them disappear forthwith into night At this sudden sight of him, the chanting gave place to a tumult of exultant shouts, and Elstead, being anxious to watch them, turned his light off again, and vanished from before their eyes But for a time he was too blind to make out what they were doing, and when at last he could distinguish them, they were kneeling again And thus they continued worshipping him, without rest or intermission, for a space of three hours

Most circumstantial was Elstead's account of this astounding city and its people, these people of perpetual night, who have never seen sun or moon or stars green vegetation nor any living, air breathing creatures, who know nothing of fire, nor any light but the phosphorescent light of living things

Startling as is his story, it is yet more startling to find that scientific men, of such eminence as Adams and Jenkins, find nothing incredible in it They tell me they see no reason why intelligent, water breathing, vertebrated creatures, inured to a low temperature and enormous pressure, and of such a heavy structure, that neither alive nor dead would they float, might not live upon the bottom of the deep sea, and quite unsuspected by us, descendants like ourselves of the great Theromorpha of the New Red Sandstone age

We should be known to them, however, as strange, meteoric creatures, wont to fall catastrophically dead

out of the mysterious blackness of their watery sky And not only we ourselves, but our ships, our metals, our appliances, would come raining down out of the night Sometimes sinking things would smite down and crush them, as if it were the judgment of some unseen power above, and sometimes would come things of the utmost rarity or utility, or shapes of inspiring suggestion One can understand, perhaps, something of their behav our at the descent of a living man if one thinks what a barbaric people might do, to whom an enhaloed, shining creature came suddenly out of the sky

At one time or another Elstead probably told the officers of the *Ptarmigan* every detail of his strange twelve hours in the abyss That he also intended to write them down is certain, but he never did and so unhappily we have to piece together the discrepant fragments of his story from the reminiscences of Commander Simmons, Weybridge, Steevens, Lindley, and the others

We see the thing darkly in fragmentary glimpses—the huge ghostly building the bowing, chanting people, with their dark chameleon like heads and faintly luminous clothing, and Elstead, with his light turned on again, vainly trying to convey to their minds that the cord by which the sphere was held was to be severed *Minute after minute* slipped away, and Elstead, looking at his watch, was horrified to find that he had oxygen only for four hours more But the chant in his honour kept on as remorselessly as if it was the marching song of his approaching death

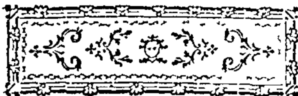
The manner of his release he does not understand, but to judge by the end of cord that hung from the sphere, it had been cut through by rubbing against the edge of the altar Abruptly the sphere rolled over, and he swept up, out of their world, as an ethereal creature clothed in a vacuum would sweep through our own atmosphere back to its native ether again He must

have torn out of their sight as a hydrogen bubble hastens upward from our air A strange ascension it must have seemed to them

The sphere rushed up with even greater velocity than, when weighted with the lead sinkers, it had rushed down It became exceedingly hot It drove up with the windows uppermost and he remembers the torrent of bubbles frothing against the glass Every moment he expected this to fly Then suddenly something like a huge wheel seemed to be released in his head, the padded compartment began spinning about him, and he fainted His next recollection was of his cabin, and of the doctor's voice

But that is the substance of the extraordinary story that Elstead related in fragments to the officers of the *Ptarmigan* He promised to write it all down at a later date His mind was chiefly occupied with the improvement of his apparatus, which was effected at Rio

It remains only to tell that on February 2, 1896, he made his second descent into the ocean abyss, with the improvements his first experience suggested What happened we shall probably never know He never returned The *Ptarmigan* beat about over the point of his submersion, seeking him in vain for thirteen days Then she returned to Rio, and the news was telegraphed to his friends So the matter remains for the present But it is hardly probable that no further attempt will be made to verify his strange story of these hitherto unsuspected cities of the deep sea.



STORY THE FIFTH

The Apple

"I MUST get rid of it," said the man in the corner of the carriage, abruptly breaking the silence

Mr Hinchcliff looked up hearing imperfectly He had been lost in the rapt contemplation of the college cap tied by a string to his portmanteau handles—the outward and visible sign of his newly gained pedagogic position—in the rapt appreciation of the college cap and the pleasant anticipations it excited For Mr Hinchcliff had just matriculated at London University, and was going to be junior assistant at the Holmwood Grammar School—a very enviable position He stared across the carriage at his fellow traveller

"Why not give it away?" said this person "Give it away! Why not?"

He was a tall, dark, sunburnt man with a pale face His arms were folded tightly, and his feet were on the seat in front of him He was pulling at a lank black moustache He stared hard at his toes

"Why not?" he said

Mr Hinchcliff coughed

The stranger lifted his eyes—they were curious dark grey eyes—and stared blankly at Mr Hinchcliff for the

best part of a minute, perhaps His expression grew to interest

"Yes," he said slowly "Why not? And end it"

"I don't quite follow you, I'm afraid," said Mr Hinchcliff with another cough

"You don't quite follow me?" said the stranger quite mechanically, his singular eyes wandering from Mr Hinchcliff to the bag with its ostentatiously displayed cap, and back to Mr Hinchcliff's downy face

"You're so abrupt, you know," apologised Mr Hinchcliff

"Why shouldn't I?" said the stranger, following his thoughts "You are a student?" he said, addressing Mr Hinchcliff

"I am—by Correspondence—of the London University," said Mr Hinchcliff, with irrepressible pride, and feeling nervously at his tie

"In pursuit of knowledge," said the stranger, and suddenly took his feet off the seat, put his fist on his knees, and stared at Mr Hinchcliff as though he had never seen a student before "Yes," he said, and flung out an index finger Then he rose, took a bag from the hat rack, and unlocked it. Quite silently he drew out something round and wrapped in a quantity of silver paper, and unfolded this carefully He held it out towards Mr Hinchcliff—a small, very smooth, golden yellow fruit

Mr Hinchcliff's eyes and mouth were open He did not offer to take this object—if he was intended to take it

"That," said this fantastic stranger, speaking very slowly, "is the Apple of the Tree of Knowledge Look at it—small and bright, and wonderful—Knowledge—and I am going to give it to you"

Mr Hinchcliff's mind worked painfully for a minute, and then the sufficient explanation, "Mad!" flashed across his brain, and illuminated the whole situation.

One humoured madmen He put his head a little on one side

"The Apple of the Tree of Knowledge, eigh!" said Mr Hinchcliff, regarding it with a finely assumed air of interest, and then looking at the interlocutor But don't you want to eat it yourself? And besides—how did you come by it?"

"It never fades I have had it now three months And it is ever bright and smooth and ripe and desirable as you see it" He laid his hand on his knee and regarded the fruit musingly Then he began to wrap it again in the papers, as though he had abandoned his intention of giving it away

"But how did you come by it?" said Mr Hinchcliff, who had his argumentative side "And how do you know that it is the Fruit of the Tree?"

"I bought this fruit," said the stranger, "three months ago—for a drink of water and a crust of bread The man who gave it to me—because I kept the life in him—was an Armenian Armenia! that wonderful country, the first of all countries where the ark of the Flood remains to this day, buried in the glaciers of Mount Ararat This man, I say fleeing with others from the Kurds who had come upon them, went up into desolate places among the mountains—places beyond the common knowledge of men And fleeing from imminent pursuit they came to a slope high among *the mountain peaks, green with a grass like knife blades* that cut and slashed most pitilessly at anyone who went into it The Kurds were close behind and there was nothing for it but to plunge in, and the worst of it was that the paths they made through it at the price of their blood served for the Kurds to follow Every one of the fugitives was killed save this Armenian and another He heard the screams and cries of his friends and the swish of the grass about those who were pursuing them—it was tall grass rising overhead And then a shouting and answers, and when presently he paused, everything was

it He pushed out again, not understanding, cut and bleeding until he came out on a steep slope of rocks below a precipice, and then he saw the grass was all on fire, and the smoke of it rose like a veil between him and his enemies"

The stranger paused "Yes?" said Mr Hinchcliff "Yes?"

"There he was, all torn and bloody from the knife blades of the grass the rocks blazing under the after noon sun—the sky molten brass—and the smoke of the fire driving towards him He dared not stay there Death he did not mind, but torture! Far away beyond the smoke he heard shouts and cries Women screaming So he went clambering up a gorge in the rocks—every where were bushes with dry branches that stuck like thorns among the leaves—until he clambered over the brow of a ridge that hid him And then he met his companion, a shepherd, who had also escaped And, counting cold and famine and thirst as nothing against the Kurds they went on into the heights, and among the snow and ice They wandered three whole days

"The third day came the vision I suppose hungry men often do see visions but then there is this fruit' He lifted the wrapped globe in his hand "And I have heard it, too, from other mountaineers who have known something of the legend It was in the evening time when the stars were increasing, that they came down a slope of polished rock into a huge dark valley all set about with strange, contorted trees and in these trees hung little globes like glow worm spheres, strange round yellow lights

"Suddenly this valley was lit far away, many miles away, far down it with a golden flame marching slowly athwart it, that made the stunted trees against it black as night, and turned the slopes all about them and their figures to the likeness of fiery gold And at the vision they, knowing the legends of the mountains, instantly knew that it was Eden they saw, or the sentinel of

Eden and they fell upon the r faces l ke men struck dead

When thev dared to look aga n l e allev as dark for a space and then the l ght came aga n c urn ng a burn ng amber

At that the shepherd sprano to h s fee and v h a shout began to r n do vn to vards the l gh b t the other man was too fearful to foll h m He s ood stunned amazed and terr fied wa ch ng h s compan on ecede towards the march ng glare And ha dly had the epherd set out v hen there came a no se l ke hunder he beat ng of in is ble w ngs hurrv ng up the valley and a great and terr ble fear and at hat the man who gave me the fr it t rned— f he m ght st ll escape And hurrv ng headlong up he slope aga n with tha tumult sweeping after h m he s umbled aga ns one o these st nted b shes and a r pe fru t came off t nto h s hand Th s fru t For h v th the v ngs and the h nder rolled all about h m He fell and fa nted and when he came to h s senses he was back among th blackened r ns of h s own v lla e and I and the others vere at end ng to the wounded A s on But h golden fru t of the tree was s ll cl tched n h s hand There were others there who knev the legend knev what that strange fru t m ght be He paused An l th s s t he sa d

It was a most extraord nary story to be told n a h rd-class carr age on a Sussex ra lway It vas as f he real was a mere ve l to the fantast c and here a the fan a c pok ng through Is it? as all M H nchel ff could sav

The legend sa d the stranger "tells tha those h ckets of dwarfed trees grow ng about the ga den sprang from the apple that Adam carr ed n h s han l when he and Eve were dr ven for h He fel s n h ng in h s hand saw the half eaten apple and flun t petulantly as de And there they grow n tha desolate valley girdled round w th the everlast ng

snows and there the fiery swords keep ward against the Judgment Day"

"But I thought these things were"—Mr Hinchcliff paused—"fables—parables rather. Do you mean to tell me that there in Armenia"—

The stranger answered the unfinished question with the fruit in his open hand.

"But you don't know," said Mr Hinchcliff, "that that *is* the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The man may have had—a sort of mirage, say. Suppose"—

"Look at it," said the stranger.

It was certainly a strange-looking globe, not really an apple, Mr Hinchcliff saw, and a curious glowing golden colour, almost as though light itself was wrought into its substance. As he looked at it, he began to see more vividly the desolate valley among the mountains, the guarding swords of fire, the strange antiquities of the story he had just heard. He rubbed a knuckle into his eye. "But"—said he.

"It has kept like that, smooth and full, three months. Longer than that it is now by some days. No drying, no withering, no decay."

"And you yourself," said Mr Hinchcliff, "really believe that"—

"Is the Forbidden Fruit."

There was no mistaking the earnestness of the man's manner and his perfect sanity. "The Fruit of Knowledge," he said.

"Suppose it was?" said Mr Hinchcliff after a pause, still staring at it. "But after all," said Mr Hinchcliff, "it's not my kind of knowledge—not the sort of knowledge I mean. Adam and Eve have eaten it already."

"We inherit their sins—not their knowledge," said the stranger. "That would make it all clear and bright again. We should see into everything, through every thing, into the deepest meaning of everything"—

"Why don't you eat it, then?" said Mr Hinchcliff with an inspiration.

"I took it intending to eat it," said the stranger "Man has fallen Merely to eat again could scarcely —"

"Knowledge is power," said Mr Hinchcliff

"But is it happiness? I am older than you—more than twice as old Time after time I have held this in my hand, and my heart has failed me at the thought of all that one might know, that terrible lucidity—Suppose suddenly all the world became pitilessly clear?"

"That, I think, would be a great advantage" said Mr Hinchcliff, "on the whole"

"Suppose you saw into the hearts and minds of every one about you, into their most secret recesses—people you loved, whose love you valued?"

"You'd soon find out the humbugs," said Mr Hinchcliff, greatly struck by the idea

"And worse—to know yourself, bare of your most intimate illusions To see yourself in your place All that your lusts and weaknesses prevented your doing No merciful perspective"

"That might be an excellent thing too 'Know thyself,' you know"

"You are young," said the stranger

"If you don't care to eat it, and it bothers you, why don't you throw it away?"

"There again, perhaps you will not understand me To me, how could one throw away a thing like that, glowing, wonderful? Once one has it, one is bound But, on the other hand to *give* it away! To give it away to someone who thirsted after knowledge who found no terror in the thought of that clear perception"—

"Of course," said Mr Hinchcliff thoughtfully, "it might be some sort of poisonous fruit"

And then his eye caught something motionless the end of a white board black lettered outside the carriage window "—swood" he saw He started convulsively "Gracious!" said Mr Hinchcliff "Holm

wood!"—and the practical present blotted out the mystic realisations that had been stealing upon him

In another moment he was opening the carriage door, portmanteau in hand The guard was already fluttering his green flag Mr Hinchcliff jumped out "Here!" said a voice behind him, and he saw the dark eyes of the stranger shining and the golden fruit, bright and bare, held out of the open carriage door He took it instinctively, the train was already moving

"*No!*" shouted the stranger, and made a snatch at it as if to take it back

"Stand away," cried a country porter, thrusting for ward to close the door The stranger shouted something Mr Hinchcliff did not catch, head and arm thrust excitedly out of the window, and then the shadow of the bridge fell on him, and in a trice he was hidden Mr Hinchcliff stood astonished, staring at the end of the last waggon receding round the bend, and with the wonderful fruit in his hand For the fraction of a minute his mind was confused, and then he became aware that two or three people on the platform were regarding him with interest Was he not the new Grammar School master making his début? It occurred to him that, so far as they could tell, the fruit might very well be the naïve refreshment of an orange He flushed at the thought, and thrust the fruit into his side pocket, where it bulged undesirably But there was no help for it, so he went towards them, awkwardly concealing his sense of awkwardness to ask the way to the Grammar School, and the means of getting his portmanteau and the two tin boxes which lay up the platform thither Of all the odd and fantastic yarns to tell a fellow!

His luggage could be taken on a truck for sixpence, he found and he could precede it on foot He fancied an ironical note in the voices He was painfully aware of his contour

The curious earnestness of the man in the train, and

the glamour of the story he told, had, for a tim diverted the current of Mr Hinchcliff's thoughts It drove like a mist before his immediate concerns Fires that went to and fro! But the preoccupation of his new position, and the impression he was to produce upon Holmwood generally, and the school people in particular, returned upon him with reinvigorating power before he left the station and cleared his mental atmos phere But it is extraordinary what an inconvenient thing the addition of a soft and rather brightly golden fruit, not three inches in diameter may prove to a sensitive youth on his best appearance In the pocket of his black jacket i bulged dreadfully, spoilt the lines altogether He passed a little old lady in black, and he felt her eye drop upon the excrescence at once He was wearing one glove and carrying the other together with his stick, so that to bear the fruit openly was impossible In one place where the road into the town seemed suitably secluded, he took his encumbrance out of his pocket and tried it in his hat It was just too large, the hat wobbled ludicrously and just as he was taking it out again, a butcher's boy came driving round the corner

"Confound it!" said Mr Hinchcliff

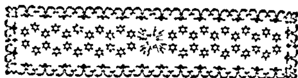
He would have eaten the thing, and attained omniscience there and then but it would seem so silly to go into the town sucking a juicy fruit—and it certainly felt juicy If one of the boys should come by, it might do him a serious injury with his discipline so to be seen And the juice might make his face sticky and get upon his cuffs—or it might be an acid juice as potent as lemon, and take all the colour out of his clothes

Then round a bend in the lane came two pleasant sunlit girlish figures They were walking slowly towards the town and chattering—at any moment they might look round and see a hot faced young man behind them carrying a kind of phosphorescent yellow tomato! They would be sure to laugh

"*Hang!*" said Mr Hinchcliff, and with a swift jerk sent the encumbrance flying over the stone wall of an orchard that there abutted on the road. As it vanished, he felt a faint twinge of loss that lasted scarcely a moment. He adjusted the stick and glove in his hand, and walked on, erect and self-conscious, to pass the girls.

But in the darkness of the night Mr Hinchcliff had a dream, and saw the valley, and the flaming swords and the contorted trees, and knew that it really was the Apple of the Tree of Knowledge that he had thrown regardlessly away. And he awoke very unhappy.

In the morning his regret had passed, but afterwards it returned and troubled him; never, however, when he was happy or busily occupied. At last, one moonlight night about eleven, when all Holmwood was quiet, his regrets returned with redoubled force, and therewith an impulse to adventure. He slipped out of the house and over the playground wall, went through the silent town to Station Lane, and climbed into the orchard where he had thrown the fruit. But nothing was to be found of it there among the dewy grass and the faint intangible globes of dandelion down.



STORY THE SIXTH

Under the Knife

"WHAT if I die under it?" The thought recurred again and again as I walked home from Haddon's It was a purely personal question I was spared the deep anxieties of a married man, and I knew there were few of my intimate friends but would find my death trouble some chiefly on account of their duty of regret I was surprised indeed and perhaps a little humiliated, as I turned the matter over, to think how few could possibly exceed the conventional requirement Things came before me stripped of glamour, in a clear dry light, during that walk from Haddon's house over Primrose Hill There were the friends of my youth, I perceived now that our affection was a tradition which we fore gathered rather laboriously to maintain There were the rivals and helpers of my later career I suppose I had been cold blooded or undemonstrative—one perhaps implies the other It may be that even the capacity for friendship is a question of physique There had been a time in my own life when I had grieved bitterly enough at the loss of a friend, but as I walked home that afternoon the emotional side of my imagination was dormant I could not pity myself, nor feel sorry for my friends, nor conceive of them as grieving for me

I was interested in this deadness of my emotional

nature—no doubt a concomitant of my stagnating physiology, and my thoughts wandered off along the line it suggested Once before, in my hot youth, I had suffered a sudden loss of blood and had been within an ace of death I remembered now that my affections as well as my passions had drained out of me, leaving scarcely anything but a tranquil resignation, a dreg of self pity It had been weeks before the old ambitions, and tendernesses, and all the complex moral interplay of a man have reasserted themselves Now again I was bloodless I had been feeding down for a week or more I was not even hungry It occurred to me that the real meaning of this numbness might be a gradual slipping away from the pleasure pain guidance of the animal man It has been proven, I take it, as thoroughly as anything can be proven in this world, that the higher emotions, the moral feelings, even the subtle tendernesses of love, are evolved from the elemental desires and fears of the simple animal they are the harness in which man's mental freedom goes And it may be that, as death overshadows us, as our possibility of acting diminishes, this complex growth of balanced impulse, propensity, and aversion whose interplay inspires our acts, goes with it Leaving what?

I was suddenly brought back to reality by an imminent collision with a butcher boy's tray I found that I was crossing the bridge over the Regent's Park Canal which runs parallel with that in the Zoological Gardens The boy in blue had been looking over his shoulder at a black barge advancing slowly, towed by a gaunt white horse In the Gardens a nurse was leading three happy little children over the bridge The trees were bright green, the spring hopefulness was still unstained by the dusts of summer, the sky in the water was bright and clear, but broken by long waves, by quivering bands of black, as the barge drove through The breeze was stirring, but it did not stir me as the spring breeze used to do

Was this dulness of feeling in itself an anticipation? It was curious that I could reason and follow out a network of suggestion as clearly as ever so, at least it seemed to me It was calmness rather than dulness that was coming upon me Was there any ground for the belief in the presentiment of death? Did a man near to death begin instinctively to withdraw himself from the meshes of matter and sense, even before the cold hand was laid upon his? I felt strangely isolated—isolated without regret—from the life and existence about me The children playing in the sun and gathering strength and experience for the business of life the park keeper gossiping with a nursemaid, the nursing mother, the young couple intent upon each other as they passed me, the trees by the wayside spreading new pleading leaves to the sunlight, the stir in their branches—I had been part of it all but I had nearly done with it now

Some way down the Broad Walk I perceived that I was tired, and that my feet were heavy It was hot that afternoon, and I turned aside and sat down on one of the green chairs that line the way In a minute I had dozed into a dream, and the tide of my thoughts washed up a vision of the resurrection I was still sitting in the chair, but I thought myself actually dead, withered, tattered, dried, one eye (I saw) pecked out by birds "Awake!" cried a voice and incontinently the dust of the path and the mould under the grass became insurgent I had never before thought of Regent's Park as a cemetery, but now through the trees, stretching as far as eye could see, I beheld a flat plain of writhing graves and heeling tombstones There seemed to be some trouble the rising dead appeared to stifle as they struggled upward they bled in their struggles *the red flesh was tattered away from the white bones* "Awake!" cried a voice but I determined I would not rise to such horrors "Awake!" They would not let me alone "Wake up!" said an angry voice.

all that was going on, and it was as if I both heard and saw. Haddon was bending over me, Mowbray behind me, the scalpel—it was a large scalpel—was cutting my flesh at the side under the flying ribs. It was interesting to see myself cut like cheese, without a pang, without even a qualm. The interest was much of a quality with that one might feel in a game of chess between strangers. Haddon's face was firm and his hand steady, but I was surprised to perceive (*how* I know not) that he was feeling the gravest doubt as to his own wisdom in the conduct of the operation.

Mowbray's thoughts, too, I could see. He was thinking that Haddon's manner showed too much of the specialist. New suggestions came up like bubbles through a stream of frothing meditation, and burst one after another in the little bright spot of his consciousness. He could not help noticing and admiring Haddon's swift dexterity, in spite of his envious quality and his disposition to detract. I saw my liver exposed. I was puzzled at my own condition. I did not feel that I was dead, but I was different in some way from my living self. The grey depression that had weighed on me for a year or more and coloured all my thoughts was gone. I perceived and thought without any emotional tint at all. I wondered if everyone perceived things in this way under chloroform, and forgot it again when he came out of it. It would be inconvenient to look into some heads, and not forget.

Although I did not think that I was dead, I still perceived quite clearly that I was soon to die. This brought me back to the consideration of Haddon's proceedings. I looked into his mind, and saw that he was afraid of cutting a branch of the portal vein. My attention was distracted from details by the curious changes going on in his mind. His consciousness was like the quivering little spot of light which is thrown by the mirror of a galvanometer. His thoughts ran under it like a stream, some through the focus bright

and distinct, some shadowy in the half light of the edge Just now the little glow was steady but the least movement on Mowbray's part, the slightest sound from outside, even a faint difference in the slow movement of the living flesh he was cutting set the light spot shivering and spinning A new sense impression came rushing up through the flow of thoughts and lo! the light spot jerked away towards it swifter than a frightened fish It was wonderful to think that upon that unstable, fitful thing depended all the complex motions of the man, that for the next five minutes therefore, my life hung upon its movements And he was growing more and more nervous in his work It was as if a little picture of a cut vein grew brighter, and struggled to oust from his brain another picture of a cut falling short of the mark He was afraid his dread of cutting too little was battling with his dread of cutting too far

Then, suddenly, like an escape of water from under a lock gate, a great uprush of horrible realisation set all his thoughts swirling and simultaneously I perceived that the vein was cut He started back with a hoarse exclamation, and I saw the brown purple blood gather in a swift bead, and run trickling He was horrified He pitched the red stained scalpel on to the octagonal table, and instantly both doctors flung themselves upon me, making hasty and ill-conceived efforts to remedy the disaster "Ice!" said Mowbray, gasping But I knew that I was killed, though my body still clung to me.

I will not describe their belated endeavours to save me, though I perceived every detail My perceptions were sharper and swifter than they had ever been in life, my thoughts rushed through my mind with incredible swiftness, but with perfect definition I can only compare their crowded clarity to the effects of a reasonable dose of opium In a moment it would all be over, and I should be free I knew I was immortal

but what would happen I did not know Should I drift off presently, like a puff of smoke from a gun, in some kind of half material body, an attenuated version of my material self? Should I find myself suddenly among the innumerable hosts of the dead, and know the world about me for the phantasmagoria it had always seemed? Should I drift to some spiritualistic *seance*, and there make foolish, incomprehensible attempts to affect a purblind medium? It was a state of unemotional curiosity, of colourless expectation And then I realised a growing stress upon me, a feeling as though some huge human magnet was drawing me upward out of my body The stress grew and grew I seemed an atom for which monstrous forces were fighting For one brief terrible moment sensation came back to me That feeling of falling headlong which comes in nightmares that feeling a thousand times intensified that and a black horror swept across my thoughts in a torrent

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I was in mid air Far below was the West End of London, receding rapidly,—for I seemed to be flying swiftly upward,—and, as it receded passing westward, like a panorama I could see, through the faint haze of smoke, the innumerable roofs chimney set, the narrow roadways stippled with people and conveyances, the little specks of squares, and the church steeples like thorns sticking out of the fabric But it spun away as the earth rotated on its axis, and in a few seconds (as it seemed) I was over the scattered clumps of town about Ealing, the little Thames a thread of blue to the south, and the Chiltern Hills and the North Downs coming up like the rim of a basin far away and faint with haze Up I rushed And at first I had not the faintest conception what this headlong rush upward could mean

Every moment the circle of scenery beneath me grew wider and wider, and the details of town and field, of

hill and valley, got more and more hazy and pale and indistinct, a luminous grey was mingled more and more with the blue of the hills and the green of the open meadows, and a little patch of cloud low and far to the west, shone ever more dazzlingly white Above, as the veil of atmosphere between myself and outer space grew thinner, the sky, which had been a fair springtime blue at first, grew deeper and richer in colour, passing steadily through the intervening shades until presently it was as dark as the blue sky of midnight and presently as black as the blackness of a frosty starlight, and at last as black as no blackness I had ever beheld And first one star and then many, and at last an innumerable host broke out upon the sky more stars than anyone has ever seen from the face of the earth For the blueness of the sky is the light of the sun and stars sifted and spread abroad blindingly there is diffused light even in the darkest skies of winter, and we do not see the stars by day only because of the dazzling irradiation of the sun But now I saw things—I know not how, assuredly with no mortal eyes—and that defect of bedazzlement blinded me no longer The sun was incredibly strange and wonderful The body of it was a disc of blinding white light not yellowish as it seems to those who live upon the earth, but livid white, all streaked with scarlet streaks and rimmed about with a fringe of writhing tongues of red fire And shooting half way across the heavens from either side of it and brighter than the Milky Way, were two pinions of silver white, making it look more like those winged globes I have seen in Egyptian sculpture, than anything else I can remember *upon earth These I knew for the solar corona though* I had never seen anything of it but a picture during the days of my earthly life

When my attention came back to the earth again, I saw that it had fallen very far away from me Field and town were long since indistinguishable, and all the varied hues of the country were merging into a uniform

bright grey, broken only by the brilliant white of the clouds that lay scattered in flocculent masses over Ireland and the west of England For now I could see the outlines of the north of France and Ireland, and all this island of Britain save where Scotland passed over the horizon to the north, or where the coast was blurred or obliterated by cloud The sea was a dull grey, and darker than the land, and the whole panorama was rotating slowly towards the east

All this had happened so swiftly that, until I was some thousand miles or so from the earth, I had no thought for myself But now I perceived I had neither hands nor feet, neither parts nor organs, and that I felt neither alarm nor pain All about me I perceived that the vacancy (for I had already left the air behind) was cold beyond the imagination of man, but it troubled me not The sun's rays shot through the void, powerless to light or heat until they should strike on matter in their course I saw things with a serene self forgetful ness even as if I were God And down below there, rushing away from me,—countless miles in a second — where a little dark spot on the grey marked the position of London, two doctors were struggling to restore life to the poor hacked and outworn shell I had abandoned I felt then such release, such serenity as I can compare to no mortal delight I have ever known

It was only after I had perceived all these things that the meaning of that headlong rush of the earth grew into comprehension Yet it was so simple, so obvious that I was amazed at my never anticipating the thing that was happening to me I had suddenly been cut adrift from matter all that was material of me was there upon earth, whirling away through space held to the earth by gravitation, partaking of the earth's inertia moving in its wreath of epicycles round the sun and with the sun and the planets on their vast march through space But the immaterial has no inertia, feels nothing of the pull of matter for matter where it parts

from its garment of flesh, there it remains (so far as space concerns it any longer) immovable in space *I was not leaving the earth the earth was leaving me* and not only the earth, but the whole solar system was streaming past And about me in space invisible to me, scattered in the wake of the earth upon its journey there must be an innumerable multitude of souls stripped like myself of the material, stripped like myself *of the passions of the individual* and the generous emotions of the gregarious brute naked intelligences things of newborn wonder and thought marvelling at the strange release that had suddenly come on them!

As I receded faster and faster from the strange white sun in the black heavens, and from the broad and shining earth upon which my being had begun, I seemed to grow, in some incredible manner vast vast as regards this world I had left, vast as regards the moments and periods of a human life Very soon I saw the full circle of the earth, slightly gibbous like the moon when she nears her full, but very large and the silvery shape of America was now in the noonday blaze wherein (as it seemed) little England had been basking but a few minutes ago At first the earth was large and shone in the heavens, filling a great part of them but every moment she grew smaller and more distant As she shrunk, the broad moon in its third quarter crept into view over the rim of her disc I looked for the constellations Only that part of Aries directly behind the sun, and the Lion, which the earth covered were hidden I recognised the tortuous, tattered band of the Milky Way, with Vega very bright between sun and earth and Sirius and Orion shone splendid against the unfathomable blackness in the opposite quarter of the heavens The Pole Star was overhead, and the Great Bear hung over the circle of the earth And away beneath and beyond the shining corona of the sun were strange groupings of stars I had never seen in my life—notably, a dagger shaped group that I knew for the Southern

Cross All these were no larger than when they had shone on earth but the little stars that one scarcely sees shone now against the setting of black vacancy as brightly as the first magnitudes had done, while the larger worlds were points of indescribable glory and colour Aldebaran was a spot of blood red fire, and Sirius condensed to one point the light of a world of sapphires And they shone steadily they did not scintillate, they were calmly glorious My impressions had an adamantine hardness and brightness there was no blurring softness, no atmosphere, nothing but infinite darkness set with the myriads of these acute and brilliant points and specks of light Presently, when I looked again, the little earth seemed no bigger than the sun, and it dwindled and turned as I looked until, in a second's space (as it seemed to me), it was halved, and so it went on swiftly dwindling Far away in the opposite direction, a little pinkish pin's head of light, shining steadily, was the planet Mars I swam motionless in vacancy, and, without a trace of terror or astonishment, watched the speck of cosmic dust we call the world fall away from me

Presently it dawned upon me that my sense of duration had changed that my mind was moving not faster but infinitely slowlier, that between each separate impression there was a period of many days The moon spun once round the earth as I noted this and I perceived clearly the motion of Mars in his orbit Moreover, it appeared as if the time between thought and thought grew steadily greater, until at last a thousand years was but a moment in my perception

At first the constellations had shone motionless against the black background of [illegible] space, but presently it seemed as though the [illegible] Hercules and the Scorpion was con[illegible] and Aldebaran and their neigh[illegible] Flashing suddenly out of [illegible] a flying multitude of [illegible]icles [illegible]

in a sunbeam, and encompassed in a faintly luminous haze. They swirled all about me, and passed again in a twinkling far behind. And then I saw that a bright spot of light, that shone a little to one side of my path, was growing very rapidly larger, and perceived that it was the planet Saturn rushing towards me. Larger and larger it grew, swallowing up the heavens behind it, and hiding every moment a fresh multitude of stars. I perceived its flattened, whirling body, its disc-like belt, and seven of its little satellites. It grew and grew, till it towered enormous; and then I plunged amid a streaming multitude of clashing stones and dancing dust-particles and gas-eddies, and saw for a moment the mighty triple belt like three concentric arches of moonlight above me, its shadow black on the boiling tumult below. These things happened in one-tenth of the time it takes to tell of them. The planet went by like a flash of lightning; for a few seconds it blotted out the sun, and there and then became a mere black, dwindling, winged patch against the light. The earth, the mother mote of my being, I could no longer see.

So with a stately swiftness, in the profoundest silence, the solar system fell from me, as it had been a garment, until the sun was a mere star amid the multitude of stars, with its eddy of planet-specks lost in the confused glittering of the remoter light. I was no longer a denizen of the solar system: I had come to the Outer Universe. I seemed to grasp and comprehend the whole world of matter. Ever more swiftly the stars closed in about the spot where Antares and Vega had vanished in a luminous haze, until that part of the sky had the semblance of a whirling mass of nebulae, and ever before *me yawned vaster gaps of vacant blackness and the stars* shone fewer and fewer. It seemed as if I moved towards a point between Orion's belt and sword; and the void about that region opened vaster and vaster every second, an incredible gulf of nothingness, into which I was falling. Faster and ever faster the universe rushed by,

a hurry of whirling motes at last, speeding silently into the void. Stars glowing brighter and brighter, with their circling planets catching the light in a ghostly fashion as I neared them, shone out and vanished again into inexistence; faint comets, clusters of meteorites, winking specks of matter, eddying light points, whizzed past, some perhaps a hundred millions of miles or so from me at most, few nearer, travelling with unimaginable rapidity, shooting constellations, momentary darts of fire, through that black, enormous night. More than anything else it was like a dusty draught, sunbeam lit. Broader, and wider, and deeper grew the starless space, the vacant Beyond, into which I was being drawn. At last a quarter of the heavens was black and blank, and the whole headlong rush of stellar universe closed in behind me like a veil of light that is gathered together. It drove away from me like a monstrous jack o' lantern driven by the wind. I had come out into the wilderness of space. Ever the vacant blackness grew broader, until the hosts of the stars seemed only like a swarm of fiery specks hurrying away from me, inconceivably remote, and the darkness, the nothingness and emptiness, was about me on every side. Soon the little universe of matter, the cage of points in which I had begun to be, was dwindling, now to a whirling disc of luminous glittering, and now to one minute disc of hazy light. In a little while it would shrink to a point, and at last would vanish altogether.

Suddenly feeling came back to me—feeling in the shape of overwhelming terror: such a dread of those dark vastitudes as no words can describe, a passionate resurgence of sympathy and social desire. Were there other souls, invisible to me as I to them, about me in the blackness? or was I indeed, even as I felt, alone? Had I passed out of being into something that was neither being nor not being? The covering of the body, the covering of matter, had been torn from me, and the hallucinations of companionship and security

Everything was black and silent I had ceased to be I was nothing There was nothing, save only that infinitesimal dot of light that dwindled in the gulf I strained myself to hear and see, and for a while there was naught but infinite silence, intolerable darkness, horror, and despair

Then I saw that about the spot of light into which the whole world of matter had shrunk there was a faint glow And in a band on either side of that the darkness was not absolute I watched it for ages, as it seemed to me, and through the long waiting the haze grew imperceptibly more distinct And then about the band appeared an irregular cloud of the faintest, palest brown I felt a passionate impatience, but the things grew brighter so slowly that they scarcely seemed to change What was unfolding itself? What was this strange reddish dawn in the interminable night of space?

The cloud's shape was grotesque It seemed to be looped along its lower side into four projecting masses, and, above, it ended in a straight line What phantom was it? I felt assured I had seen that figure before, but I could not think what, nor where, nor when it was Then the realisation rushed upon me *It was a clenched Hand* I was alone in space, alone with this huge, shadowy Hand, upon which the whole Universe of Matter lay like an unconsidered speck of dust It seemed as though I watched it through vast periods of time On the forefinger glittered a ring, and the universe from which I had come was but a spot of light upon the ring's curvature And the thing that the hand gripped had the likeness of a black rod Through a long eternity I watched this Hand, with the ring and the rod, marvelling and fearing and waiting helplessly on what might follow It seemed as though nothing could follow that I should watch for ever, seeing only the Hand and the thing it held, and understanding nothing of its import Was the whole universe but a refracting speck upon some greater Being? Were our

worlds, but the atoms of another universe, and those again of another, and so on through an endless progression? And what was I? Was I indeed immaterial? A vague persuasion of a body gathering about me came into my suspense. The abysmal darkness about the Hand filled with impalpable suggestions, with uncertain fluctuating shapes.

Came a sound, like the sound of a tolling bell: faint, as if infinitely far; muffled as though heard through thick swathings of darkness: a deep, vibrating resonance, with vast gulfs of silence between each stroke. And the Hand appeared to tighten on the rod. And I saw far above the Hand, towards the apex of the darkness, a circle of dim phosphorescence, a ghostly sphere whence these sounds came throbbing; and at the last stroke the Hand vanished, for the hour had come, and I heard a noise of many waters. But the black rod remained as a great band across the sky. And then a voice, which seemed to run to the uttermost parts of space, spoke, saying, "There will be no more pain."

At that an almost intolerable gladness and radiance rushed upon me, and I saw the circle shining white and bright, and the rod black and shining, and many things else distinct and clear. And the circle was the face of the clock, and the rod the rail of my bed. Haddon was standing at the foot, against the rail, with a small pair of scissors on his fingers; and the hands of my clock on the mantel over his shoulder were clasped together over the hour of twelve. Mowbray was washing something in a basin at the octagonal table, and at my side I felt a subdued feeling that could scarce be spoken of as pain.

The operation had not killed me. And I perceived, suddenly, that the dull melancholy of half a year was lifted from my mind.



STORY THE SEVENTH

The Sea Raiders

§ 1

UNTIL the extraordinary affair at Sidmouth, the peculiar species *Haploteuthis ferox* was known to science only generically, on the strength of a half-digested tentacle obtained near the Azores, and a decaying body pecked by birds and nibbled by fish, found early in 1896 by Mr Jennings, near Land's End.

In no department of zoological science, indeed, are we quite so much in the dark as with regard to the deep-sea cephalopods. A mere accident, for instance, it was that led to the Prince of Monaco's discovery of nearly a dozen new forms in the summer of 1895, a discovery in which the before-mentioned tentacle was included. It chanced that a cachalot was killed off Terceira by some sperm whalers, and in its last struggles charged almost to the Prince's yacht, missed it, rolled under, and died within twenty yards of his rudder. And in its agony it threw up a number of large objects, which the Prince, dimly perceiving they were strange and important, was, by a happy expedient, able to secure before they sank. He set his screws in motion, and

kept them circling in the vortices thus created until a boat could be lowered. And these specimens were whole cephalopods and fragments of cephalopods, some of gigantic proportions, and almost all of them unknown to science!

It would seem, indeed, that these large and agile creatures, living in the middle depths of the sea, must to a large extent, for ever remain unknown to us, since under water they are too nimble for nets, and it is only by such rare unlooked for accidents that specimens can be obtained. In the case of *Haploteuthis ferox* for instance, we are still altogether ignorant of its habitat as ignorant as we are of the breeding ground of the herring or the sea ways of the salmon. And zoologists are altogether at a loss to account for its sudden appearance on our coast. Possibly it was the stress of a hunger migration that drove it hither out of the deep. But it will be, perhaps, better to avoid necessarily inconclusive discussion, and to proceed at once with our narrative.

The first human being to set eyes upon a living *Haploteuthis*—the first human being to survive, that is, for there can be little doubt now that the wave of bathing fatalities and boating accidents that travelled along the coast of Cornwall and Devon in early May was due to this cause—was a retired tea dealer of the name of Fison, who was stopping at a Sidmouth boarding house. It was in the afternoon, and he was walking along the cliff path between Sidmouth and Ladram Bay. The cliffs in this direction are very high, but down the red face of them in one place a kind of ladder staircase has been made. He was near this when his attention was attracted by what at first he thought to be a cluster of birds struggling over a fragment of food that caught the sunlight, and glistened pinkish white. The tide was right out, and this object was not only far below him but remote across a broad waste of rock reefs covered with dark seaweed and interspersed with silvery shining

tidal pools And he was, moreover dazzled by the brightness of the fur her water

In a minute, regarding this again he perceived that his judgment was in fault, for ove this struggle circled a number of birds, jackdaws and gulls for the most part the la ter gleaming blindingly when the sunlight smote their wings, and they seemed minute in comparison with it And his curiosity was perhaps aroused all the more strongly because of his first insufficient exp anations

As he had nothing better to do than amuse himself he decided to make this object whatever it was the goal of his afternoon walk, ins ead of Ladram Bay conceiving *it might perhaps be a great fish of some sort stranded* by some chance and flapping about in its distress And so he hurried down the long steep ladder stopping at intervals of thirty feet or so to take breath and scan the mysterious movement

At the foot of the cliff he was of course, nearer his object than he had been but on the other hand it now came up against the incandescent sky beneath the sun so as to seem dark and indistinct Whatever was pinkish of it was now hidden by a skerry of weedy boulders But he perceived that it was made up of seven rounded bodies, distinct or connected and that the birds kept up a constant croaking and screaming, but seemed afraid to approach it too closely

Mr Fison, torn by curiosity began picking his way across the wave worn rocks, and finding the wet seaweed that covered them thickly rendered them extremely slip pery he stopped removed his shoes and socks and coiled his trousers above his knees His object was of course, merely to avoid stumbling into the rocky pools about him, and perhaps he was rather glad as all men are, of an excuse to resume, even for a moment, the sensations of his boyhood At any rate, it is to this no doubt, that he owes his life

He approached his mark with all the assurance which the absolute security of this country against all forms of

Their minds were set on adventure, and they expressed their disappointment freely But presently they saw one of the monsters swimming through the water seaward with a curious rolling motion that suggested to Mr Fison the spinning roll of a captive balloon Almost immediately after, the waving streamers of laminaria were extraordinarily perturbed, parted for a moment, and three of these beasts became darkly visible, struggling for what was probably some fragment of the drowned [illegible] had [illegible] eating [illegible] they saw a tumultuous movement among the weeds They desisted to see more clearly, and as soon as the water was smooth, they saw, as it seemed to them, the whole sea bottom among the weeds set with eyes

"Ugly swine!" cried one of the men "Why, there's dozens!"

And forthwith the things began to rise through the water about them Mr Fison has since described to the writer this startling eruption out of the waving laminaria meadows To him it seemed to occupy a considerable time, but it is probable that really it was an affair of a few seconds only For a time nothing but eyes, and then he speaks of tentacles streaming out and parting the weed fronds this way and that Then these things growing larger, until at last the bottom was hidden by their intercoiling forms, and the tips of tentacles rose darkly here and there into the air above the swell of the waters

One came up boldly to the side of the boat, and clinging to this with three of its sucker-set tentacles threw four others over the gunwale, as if with an intention either of oversetting the boat or of clambering into it Mr Fison at once caught up the boathook and jabbing furiously at the soft tentacles, forced it to desist He was struck in the back and almost pitched

overboard by the boatman wl o was s ng h s oar res st a s m lar a ack on the o l er s de of th h a Bu the centacles n e her s de a o ce rela ed he r hold a th s sl d out of s ght and spla hed nto he wa er

W e d better get o t of th s sa d Mr F son who was trembling v olently He went to the t ller wh le the boatman and one of the w rkmen seated hemsel e and began row ng The other workman stood up n the fore part of the boat w th the boathook readv to strike any more tentacles tha m gh appear Noth ng else seems to have been sa d Mr F son had expressed the common feel ng beyond amendment In a hushed scared mood with faces wh e and drawn they set about escap ng from the pos t on into vh ch they had so reck lessly blundered

But the oars had scarcelv dropped into the water before dark taper ng serpen ne ropes had bound them and were about the rudder and creep ng up the s des of the boat w th a loop ng mot on came the suckers aga n The men gr pped the r oars and pulled but t was l ke trying to move a boat in a float ng raft of weeds "Help here cr ed the boatman and Mr F son and the second workman rushed to help lug at the oar

Then the man w th the boathook—h s name was Ewan or Ewen—sprang up w th a curse and began str k ng downward over the s de as far as he could reach at the bank of tentacles that now clustered along the boat s bo tom And at the same t me the two

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Mr F son stagger ng w th the qu vering rock ng of the boat h s teeth set h s breath com ng short and th- veins start ng on h s hands as he pulled at h s o suddenly cast his eyes seaward And there not fifty

yards off across the long rollers of the incoming tide, was a large boat standing in towards them, with three women and a little child in it. A boatman was rowing, and a little man in a pink ribboned straw hat and whites stood in the stern hailing them. For a moment, of course, Mr Fison thought of help, and then he thought of the child. He abandoned his oar forthwith, threw up his arms in a frantic gesture, and screamed to the party in the boat to keep away "for God's sake!" It says much for the modesty and courage of Mr Fison that he does not seem to be aware that there was any quality of heroism in his action at this juncture. The oar he had abandoned was at once drawn under, and presently reappeared floating about twenty yards away.

At the same moment Mr Fison felt the boat under him lurch violently, and a hoarse scream, a prolonged cry of terror from Hill, the boatman, caused him to forget the party of excursionists altogether. He turned, and saw Hill crouching by the forward rowlock, his face convulsed with terror, and his right arm over the side and drawn tightly down. He gave now a succession of short sharp cries, "Oh! oh! oh!—oh!" Mr Fison believes that he must have been hacking at the tentacles below the water line, and have been grasped by them, but, of course, it is quite impossible to say now certainly what had happened. The boat was heeling over so that the gunwale was within ten inches of the water, and both Ewan and the other labourer were striking down into the water, with oar and boathook, on either side of Hill's arm. Mr Fison instinctively placed himself to counterpoise them.

Then Hill, who was a burly, powerful man, made a strenuous effort, and rose almost to a standing position. He lifted his arm, indeed, clean out of the water. Hanging to it was a complicated tangle of brown ropes, and the eyes of one of the brutes that had hold of him, glaring straight and resolute, showed momentarily above the surface. The boat heeled more and more, and the

green brown water came pouring in a cascade over the side Then Hill slipped and fell with his ribs across the side, and his arm and the mass of tentacles about it splashed back into the water He rolled over his boot kicked Mr Fison's knee as that gentleman rushed for [illegible]ized, Hill was tugged overboard The boat righted with a violent jerk that all but sent Mr Fison over the other side, and hid the struggle in the water from his eyes

He stood staggering to recover his balance for a moment, and as he did so, he became aware that the struggle and the inflowing tide had carried them close upon the weedy rocks again Not four yards off a table of rock still rose in rhythmic movements above the in wash of the tide In a moment Mr Fison seized the oar from Ewan gave one vig rons stroke then drop ping it, ran to the bows and leapt He felt his feet slide over the rock, and by a frantic effort leapt again to wards a further mass He stumbled over this came to his knees, and rose again

"Look out!" cried someone and a large drab body struck him He was knocked flat into a tidal pool by one of the workmen and as he went down he heard smothered, choking cries that he believed at the time came from Hill Then he found himself marvelling at the shrillness and variety of Hill's voice Someone jumped over him and a curving rush of foamy water poured over him, and passed He scrambled to his feet dripping and, without looking seaward ran as fast as his terror would let him shoreward Before him, over the flat space of scat ered rocks stumbled the two work men—one a dozen yards in front of the other

He looked over his shoulder at last, and seeing that he was not pursued, faced about He was astonished From the moment of the rising of the cephalopods out

of the water, he had been acting too swiftly to fully co prehend his actions Now it seemed to him as if he had suddenly jumped out of an evil dream

For there were the sky, cloudless and blazing with the afternoon sun, the sea weltering under its pitiless br ghtness the soft creamy foam of the breaking water and the low, long, dark ridges of rock The righted boat floated rising and falling gently on the swell abot t a dozen yards fr n shore Hill and the monsters all the stress and tumult of that fierce fight for life, had vani hed as though they had never been

Mr Fison s heart was beating violently he was throb bing to the finger tips and his breath came deep

There was something missing For some seconds he could not think clearly enough what tl is might be Sun sky sea rocks—what was it? Then he remembered the boatload of excursionists It had vanished He wondered whether he had imagined it He turned, and saw the two workmen standing side by s de un ler the projecting masses of the tall pink cliffs He hesi tated whether he should make one last attempt to s ve the man H ll His physical excitement seemed to desert him su d lenly and leave him aimless and helpless He turned shoreward, stumbling and wading towards his two companions

He looked back again, and there were now two boats floating and the one farthest out at sea pitched clums ly, bottom upward

§ 3

So it was *Haploteuthis ferox* made its appearance upon the Devonshire coast So far, this has been its most serious aggress on Mr Fison's account taken together with the wave of boating and bathing casualties to wl ch I have already alluded, and the absence of fish from the Cornish coasts that year, points clearly to a shoal of these voracious deep sea monsters prowling slowly along the sub tidal coastline Hunger migration

has, I know, been suggested as the force that drove them hither, but, for my own part, I prefer to believe the alternative theory of Hemsley. Hemsley holds that a pack or shoal of these creatures may have become enamoured of human flesh by the accident of a foundered ship sinking among them, and have wandered in search of it out of their accustomed zone; first waylaying and following ships, and so coming to our shores in the wake of the Atlantic traffic. But to discuss Hemsley's cogent and admirably stated arguments would be out of place here.

It would seem that the appetites of the shoal were satisfied by the catch of eleven people—for so far as can be ascertained, there were ten people in the second boat, and certainly these creatures gave no further signs of their presence off Sidmouth that day. The coast between Seaton and Budleigh Salterton was patrolled all that evening and night by four Preventive Service boats, the men in which were armed with harpoons and cutlasses, and as the evening advanced, a number of more or less similarly equipped expeditions, organised by private individuals, joined them. Mr. Fison took no part in any of these expeditions.

About midnight excited hails were heard from a boat about a couple of miles out at sea to the south-east of Sidmouth, and a lantern was seen waving in a strange manner to and fro and up and down. The nearer boats at once hurried towards the alarm. The venturesome occupants of the boat, a seaman, a curate, and two schoolboys, had actually seen the monsters passing under their boat. The creatures, it seems, like most deep-sea organisms, were phosphorescent, and they had been floating, five fathoms deep or so, like creatures of moonshine through the blackness of the water, their tentacles retracted and as if asleep, rolling over and over, and moving slowly in a wedge-like formation towards the south-east.

These people told their story in gesticulated frag-

ments, as first one boat drew alongside and then another At last there was a little fleet of eight or nine boats collected together, and from them a tumult, like the chatter of a marketplace, rose into the stillness of the night There was little or no disposition to pursue the shoal the people had neither weapons nor experience for such a dubious chase, and presently—even with a certain relief it may be—the boats turned shoreward

And now to tell what is perhaps the most astonishing fact in this whole astonishing raid We have not the slightest knowledge of the subsequent movements of the shoal although the whole south west coast was now alert for it But it may, perhaps, be significant that a cachalot was stranded off Sark on June 3 Two weeks and three days after this Sidmouth affair, a living *Haploteuthis* came ashore on Calais sands It was alive, because several witnesses saw its tentacles moving in a convulsive way But it is probable that it was dying A gentleman named Pouchet obtained a rifle and shot it

That was the last appearance of a living *Haploteuthis* No others were seen on the French coast On the 15th of June a dead body almost complete, was washed ashore near Torquay and a few days later a boat from the Marine Biological station, engaged in dredging off Plymouth picked up a rotting specimen, slashed deeply with a cutlass wound How the former specimen had come by its death it is impossible to say And on the last day of June, Mr Egbert Caine, an artist, bathing near Newlyn, threw up his arms, shrieked, and was drawn under A friend bathing with him made no attempt to save him, but swam at once for the shore This is the last fact to tell of this extraordinary raid from the deeper sea Whether it is really the last of these horrible creatures it is, as yet, premature to say But it is believed, and certainly it is to be hoped, that they have returned now, and returned for good, to the sunless depths of the middle seas out of which they have so strangely and so mysteriously arisen



STORY THE EIGHTH

Pollock and the Porroh Man

IT was in a swampy village on the lagoon river behind the Turner Peninsula that Pollock's first encounter with the Porroh man occurred The women of that country are famous for their good looks—they are Gallinas with a dash of European blood that dates from the days of Vasco de Gama and the English slave traders, and the Porroh man, too, was possibly inspired by a faint Caucasian taint in his composition (It's a curious thing to think that some of us may have distant cousins eating men on Sherboro Island or raiding with the Sofas) At [illegible] deltoid muscle, sent the iron dagger flying, and, [illegible] hit the man in the hand

He fired again and missed, knocking a sudden window out of the wall of the hut The Porroh man stooped in the doorway, glancing under his arm at Pollock Pollock caught a glimpse of his inverted face in the sunlight, and then the Englishman was alone, sick and

trembling with the excitement of the affair, in the twilight of the place It had all happened in less time than it takes to read about it

The woman was quite dead, and having ascertained this Pollock went to the entrance of the hut and looked out Things outside were dazzling bright Half a dozen of the porters of the expedition were standing up in a group near the green huts they occupied, and staring towards him, wondering what the shots might signify Behind the little group of men was the broad stretch of black fetid mud by the river, a green carpet of rafts of papyrus and water grass, and then the leaden water The mangroves beyond the stream loomed indistinctly through the blue haze There were no signs of excitement in the squat village, whose fence was just visible above the cane grass

Pollock came out of the hut cautiously and walked towards the river, looking over his shoulder at intervals But the Porroh man had vanished Pollock clutched his revolver nervously in his hand

One of his men came to meet him, and as he came, pointed to the bushes behind the hut in which the Porroh man had disappeared Pollock had an irritating persuasion of having made an absolute fool of himself he felt bitter, savage, at the turn things had taken At the same time, he would have to tell Waterhouse—the moral, exemplary, cautious Waterhouse—who would inevitably take the matter seriously Pollock cursed bitterly at his luck, at Waterhouse, and especially at the West Coast of Africa He felt consummately sick of the expedition And in the back of his mind all the time was a speculative doubt where precisely within the visible horizon the Porroh man might be

It is perhaps rather shocking, but he was not at all upset by the murder that had just happened He had seen so much brutality during the last three months, so many dead women, burnt huts, drying skeletons up the Kittam River in the wake of the Sofa cavalry, that his

senses were blunted What disturbed him was the persuasion that this business was only beginning

He swore savagely at the black, who ventured to ask a question, and went on into the tent under the orange trees where Waterhouse was lying, feeling exasperatingly like a boy going into the headmaster's study.

Waterhouse was still sleeping off the effects of his last dose of chlorodyne, and Pollock sat down on a packing-case beside him, and, lighting his pipe, waited for him to awake About him were scattered the pots and weapons Waterhouse had collected from the Mendi people, and which he had been repacking for the canoe voyage to Sulyma

Presently Waterhouse woke up, and after judicial stretching, decided he was all right again Pollock got him some tea Over the tea the incidents of the afternoon were described by Pollock, after some preliminary beating about the bush Waterhouse took the matter even more seriously than Pollock had anticipated He did not simply disapprove, he scolded, he insulted

"You're one of those infernal fools who think a black man isn't a human being," he said "I can't be ill a day without you must get into some dirty scrape or other This is the third time in a month that you have come crossways-on with a native, and this time you're in for it with a vengance Porroh, too! They're down upon you enough as it is, about that idol you wrote your silly name on And they're the most vindictive devils on earth! You make a man ashamed of civilisation To think you come of a decent family! If ever I cumber myself up with a vicious, stupid young lout like you again "—

"Steady on, now," snarled Pollock, in the tone that always exasperated Waterhouse, "steady on"

At that Waterhouse became speechless He jumped to his feet

"Look here, Pollock," he said, after a struggle to

control his breath "You must go home I won't have you any longer I'm ill enough as it is through you"—

"Keep your hair on," said Pollock, staring in front of him "I'm ready enough to go"

Waterhouse became calmer again He sat down on the camp stool "Very well," he said "I don't want a row Pollock you know, but it's confoundedly annoying to have one's plans put out by this kind of thing I'll come to Sulyma with you, and see you safe aboard"—

"You needn't," said Pollock "I can go alone From here"

"Not far," said Waterhouse "You don't understand this Porroh business"

"How should *I* know she belonged to a Porroh man?" said Pollock bitterly

"Well, she did," said Waterhouse, "and you can't undo the thing Go alone, indeed! I wonder what they'd do to you You don't seem to understand that this Porroh hokey pokey rules this country, is its law religion, constitution, medicine, magic They appoint the chiefs The Inquisition, at its best, couldn't hold a candle to these chaps He will probably set Awajale, the chief here, on to us It's lucky our porters are Mendis We shall have to shift this little settlement of ours Confound you, Pollock! And, of course you must go and miss him"

He thought, and his thoughts seemed disagreeable Presently he stood up and took his rifle "I'd keep close for a bit, if I were you," he said, over his shoulder, as he went out "I'm going out to see what I can find out about it"

Pollock remained sitting in the tent, meditating "I was meant for a civilised life," he said to himself, regretfully, as he filled his pipe "The sooner I get back to London or Paris the better for me

His eye fell on the sealed case in which Waterhouse

had put the featherless poisoned arrows they had bought in the Mendi country "I wish I had hit the beggar somewhere vital," said Pollock viciously

Waterhouse came back after a long interval He was not communicative, though Pollock asked him questions enough The *Porroh man, it seems, was a* prominent member of that mystical society The village was interested, but not threatening No doubt the witch-doctor had gone into the bush He was a great witch-doctor. "Of course, he's up to someth ng," said Waterhouse, and became silent

"But what can he do?" asked Pollock, unheeded

"I must get you out of this There's something brewing, or things would not be so quiet," said Water house, after a gap of silence Poll ck wanted to know what the brew might be "Dancing in a circle of skulls," said Waterhouse, "brewing a stink in a copper pot," Pollock wanted particulars Waterhouse was vague, Pollock pressing At last Waterhouse lost his temper "How the devil shou d *I* know?" he said to Pollock's twentieth inquiry what the Porroh man would do "He tried to kill you off hand in the hut *Now* I fancy he will try something more elaborate But you'll see fast enough I don t want to help unnerve you It's probably all nonsense"

That night, as they were sitting at their fire, Pollock again tried to draw Waterhouse out on the subject of Porroh methods "Better get to sleep," said Water house, when Pollock's bent became apparent, "we start early to-morrow You may want all your nerve about you"

"But what line will he take?"

"Can't say They're versatile people They know

[illegible]

to Pollock's head This, at least, was crude eno h

The blacks and half breeds sitting and yarning round their own fire jumped up, and someone fired into the dark

"Better go into one of the huts," said Waterhouse quietly, still sitting unmoved

Pollock stood up by the fire and drew his revolver Fighting at least he was not afraid of But a man in the dark is in the best of armour Realising the wisdom of Waterhouse's advice, Pollock went into the tent and lay down there

What little sleep he had was disturbed by dreams, variegated dreams, but chiefly of the Porroh man's face, upside down, as he went out of the hut, and looked up under his arm It was odd that this transitory impression should have stuck so firmly in Pollock's memory More over, he was troubled by queer pains in his limbs

In the white haze of the early morning, as they were loading the canoes, a barbed arrow suddenly appeared quivering in the ground close to Pollock's foot The boys made a perfunctory effort to clear out the thicket, but it led to no capture

After these two occurrences, there was a disposition on the part of the expedition to leave Pollock to himself, and Pollock became, for the first time in his life, anxious to mingle with blacks Waterhouse took one canoe and Pollock, in spite of a friendly desire to chat with Waterhouse, had to take the other He was left all alone in the front part of the canoe, and he had the greatest trouble to make the men—who did not love him—keep to the middle of the river, a clear hundred yards or more from either shore However, he made Shakespear, the Freetown half breed come up to his own end of the canoe and tell him about Porroh which Shakespear, failing in his attempts to leave Pollock alone, presently did with considerable freedom and gusto

The day passed The canoe glided swiftly along the ribbon of lagoon water, between the drift of water figs fallen trees papyrus, and palm wine palms, and with

the dark mangrove swamp to the left, through which one could hear now and then the roar of the Atlantic surf Shakespeare told in his soft, blurred English of how the Porroh could cast spells, how men withered up under their malice, how they could send dreams and devils, how they tormented and killed the sons of Ijibu, how they kidnapped a white trader from Sulyma who had maltreated one of the sect, and how his body looked when it was found And Pollock after each narrative cursed under his breath at the want of missionary enterprise that allowed such things to be, and at the inert British Government that ruled over this dark heathendom of Sierra Leone In the evening they came to the Kasi Lake, and sent a score of crocodiles lumbering off the island on which the expedition camped for the night

The next day they reached Sulyma and smelt the sea breeze, but Pollock had to put up there for five days before he could get on to Freetown Waterhouse, considering him to be comparatively safe here, and within the pale of Freetown influence, left him and went back with the expedition to Gbemma, and Pollock became

. . . .

who had lived in England, and he appreciated the Englishman's friendliness as a great compliment

For two days nothing happened out of the ordinary [illegible] for the most part Pollock and Perera played Nap [illegible] only game they had in common—and Pollock [illegible] debt Then, on the second evening, Pollock [illegible] disagreeable intimation of the arrival of the [illegible] man in Sulyma by getting a flesh wound in the [illegible] from a lump of filed iron It was a long sh[illegible] missile had nearly spent its force when it hit [illegible] it conveyed its message plainly enough [illegible] in his hammock, revolver in hand, all the [illegible] next morning confided, to some extent, [illegible] Portuguese

Perera took the matter seriously He knew the local customs pretty thoroughly "It is a personal question, you must know It is revenge And of course he is hurried by your leaving de country None of de natives or half breeds will interfere wid him very much—unless you make it wort deir while If you come upon him suddenly, you might shoot him But den he might shoot you

"Den dere's dis—infernal magic," said Perera "Of course, I don't believe in it—superstition—but still it's not nice to tink dat wherever you are, dere is a black man, who spends a moonlight night now and den a dancing about a fire to send you bad dreams . . Had any bad dreams?"

"Rather," said Pollock "I keep on seeing the beggar's head upside down grinning at me and showing all his teeth as he did in the hut, and coming close up to me, and then going ever so far off, and coming back It's nothing to be afraid of, but somehow it simply paralyses me with terror in my sleep Queer things—dreams I know it's a dream all the time, and I can t wake up from it"

"It's probably only fancy," said Perera "Den my niggers say Porroh men can send snakes Seen any snakes lately?"

'Only one I killed him this morning, on the floor near my hammock Almost trod on him as I got up'

"*Ah!*" said Perera, and then, reassuringly, "Of course it is a—coincidence Still I woul keep my eyes open Den dere's pains in de bones"

"I thought they were due to miasma," said Pollock.

"Probably dey are When did dey begin?"

Then Pollock remembered that he first noticed them the night after the fight in the hut "It's my opinion he don't want to kill you," said Perera—"at least not yet I've heard deir idea is to scare and worry a man wid deir spells, and narrow misses, and rheumatic pains and bad dreams and all dat, until he's sick of life Of

course, it's all talk, you know You must n't worry about it But I wonder what he'll be up to next

"*I shall have to be up to something first* said Pollock staring gloomily at the greasy cards that Perera was putting on the table ' It don't my dignity to be followed about and shot at and ted in this way I wonder if Porroh hokey pokey upsets your luck at cards

He looked at Perera suspiciously

"Very likely it does said Perera warmly shuffling "Dey are wonderful people

That afternoon Pollock killed two snakes in his hammock and there was also an extraordinary increase in the number of red ants that swarmed over the place and these annoyances put him in a fit temper to talk over business with a certain Mendi rough he had interviewed before The Mendi rough showed Pollock a little iron dagger and demonstrated where one struck in the neck, in a way that made Pollock shiver and in return for certain considerations Pollock promised him a double barrelled gun with an ornamental lock

In the evening as Pollock and Perera were playing cards the Mendi rough came in through the doorway carrying something in a blood soaked piece of native cloth

"Not here! said Pollock very hurriedly Not here!

But he was not quick enough to prevent the man who was anxious to get to Pollock's side of the bargain from opening the cloth and throwing the head of the Porroh man upon the table It bounded from there on to the floor leaving a red trail on the cards and rolled into a corner, where it came to rest upside down but glaring hard at Pollock

Perera jumped up as the thing fell among the cards and began in his excitement to gabble in Portuguese The Mendi was bowing with the red cloth in his hand "De gun! he cried Pollock stared back at the head

in the corner It bore exactly the expression it had in his dreams Something seemed to snap in his own brain as he looked at it

Then Perera found his English again

"You got him killed?" he said "You did not kill him yourself?"

"Why should I?" said Pollock

"But he will not be able to take it off now!"

"Take *what* off?" said Pollock

"And all dese cards are spoiled!"

"*What* do you mean by taking off?" said Pollock

"You must send me a new pack from Freetown You can buy dem dere"

"But— take it off'?"

"It is only superstition I forgot De niggers say dat if de witches—he was a witch— But it is rubbish You must make de Porroh man take it off, or kill him yourself It is very silly"

Pollock swore under his breath, still staring hard at the head in the corner

"I can't stand that glare," he said Then suddenly he rushed at the thing and kicked it It rolled some yards or so, and came to rest in the same position as before, upside down, and looking at him

"He is ugly," said the Anglo Portugese "Very ugly Dey do it on deir faces with little knives"

Pollock would have kicked the head again, but the Mendi man touched him on the arm "De gun?" he said, looking nervously at the head

"Two—if you will take that beastly thing away," said Pollock

The Mendi shook his head, and intimated that he only wanted one gun now due to him, and for which he would be obliged Pollock found neither cajolery nor bullying any good with him Perera had a gun to sell (at a profit of three hundred per cent), and with that the man presently departed Then Pollock's eyes, against his will, were recalled to the thing on the floor

"It is funny dat his head keeps upside down," said Perera, with an uneasy laugh "His brains must be heavy, like de weight in de little images one sees dat keep always upright wid lead in dem You will take him wiv you when you go presently You might take him now. De cards are all spoilt Dere is a man sell dem in Freetown De room is in a filthy mess as it is You should have killed him yourself"

Pollock pulled himself together, and went and picked up the head He would hang it up by the lamp hook in the middle of the ceiling of his room, and dig a grave for it at once He was under the impression that he hung it up by the hair, but that must have been wrong, for when he returned for it, it was hanging by the neck upside down

He buried it before sunset on the north side of the shed he occupied, so that he should not have to pass the grave after dark when he was returning from Perera's He killed two snakes before he went to sleep In the darkest part of the night he awoke with a start, and heard a pattering sound and something scraping on the floor He sat up noiselessly, and felt under his pillow for his revolver A mumbling growl followed, and Pollock fired at the sound There was a yelp, and something dark passed for a moment across the hazy blue of the doorway "A dog!" said Pollock, lying down again

In the early dawn he awoke again with a peculiar sense of unrest The vague pain in his bones had returned For some time he lay watching the red ants that were swarming over the ceiling, and then, as the light grew brighter, he looked over the edge of his hammock and saw something dark on the floor He gave such a violent start that the hammock overset and flung him out

He found himself lying, perhaps, a yard away from the head of the Porroh man It had been disinterred by the dog, and the nose was grievously battered Ants

and flies swarmed over it By an odd coincidence, it was still upside down and with the same diabolical expression in the inverted eyes

Pollock sat paralysed and stared at the horror for some time Then he got up and walked round it—giving it a wide berth—and out of the shed The clear light of the sunrise, the living stir of vegetation before the breath of the dying land breeze, and the empty grave with the marks of the dog's paws, lightened the weight upon his mind a little

He told Perera of the business as though it was a jest—a jest to be told with white lips "You should not have frighten de dog," said Perera, with poorly simulated hilarity

The next two days, until the steamer came, were spent by Pollock in making a more effectual disposition of his possession Overcoming his aversion to handling the thing he went down to the river mouth and threw it into the sea water, but by some miracle it escaped the crocodiles, and was cast up by the tide on the mud a little way up the river, to be found by an intelligent Arab half breed and offered for sale to Pollock and Perera as a curiosity, just on the edge of night The native hung about in the brief twilight, making lower and lower offers and at last, getting scared in some way by the evident dread these wise white men had for the thing went off, and, passing Pollock's shed, threw his burden in there for Pollock to discover in the morning

At this Pollock got into a kind of frenzy He would burn the thing He went out straightway into the dawn and had constructed a big pyre of brushwood before the heat of the day He was interrupted by the hooter of the little paddle steamer from Monrovia to Bathurst which was coming through the gap in the bar "Thank Heaven!" said Pollock, with infinite piety, when the meaning of the sound dawned upon him With trembling hands he lit his pile of wood hastily,

threw the head upon it, and went away to pack his portmanteau and make his adieux to Perera

That afternoon, with a sense of infinite relief, Pollock watched the flat swampy foreshore of Sulyma grow small in the distance. The gap in the long line of white surge became narrower and narrower It seemed to be closing in and cutting him off from his trouble The feeling of dread and worry began to slip from him bit by bit. At Sulyma belief in Porroh malignity and Porroh magic had been in the air his sense of Porroh *had* been vast, pervading, threatening, dreadful Now manifestly the domain of Porroh was only a little place, a little black band between the sea and the blue cloudy Mendi uplands

"Good bye, Porroh!" said Pollock "Good bye—certainly not *au revoir*"

The captain of the steamer came and leant over the rail beside him, and wished him good evening and spat at the froth of the wake in token of friendly ease

"I picked up a rummy curio on the beach this go," said the captain "It's a thing I never saw done this side of Indy before"

"What might that be?" said Pollock

"Pickled 'ed," said the captain

"*What?*" said Pollock

"'Ed—smoked 'Ed of one of these Porroh chaps, all ornamented with knife-cuts Why? What's up? Nothing? I shouldn't have took you for a nervous chap Green in the face By gosh! you're a bad sailor All right, eh? Lord how funny you went! Well this 'ed I was telling you of is a bit rum in a way I've got it along with some snakes in a jar of spirit in my cabin what I keeps for such curios and I'm hanged if it don't float upsy down Hullo!"

Pollock had given an incoherent cry, and had his hands in his hair He ran towards the paddle boxes with a half formed idea of jumping into the sea, and

then he realised his position and turned back towards the captain

"Here!" said the captain "Jack Philips, just keep him off me! Stand off! No nearer, mister! What's the matter with you? Are you mad?"

Pollock put his hand to his head It was no good explaining "I believe I am pretty nearly mad at times" he said "It's a pain I have here Comes suddenly You'll excuse me, I hope"

He was white and in a perspiration He saw suddenly very clearly all the danger he ran of having his sanity doubted He forced himself to restore the captain's confidence, by answering his sympathetic inquiries, noting his suggestions, even trying a spoonful of neat brandy in his cheek, and, that matter settled, asking a number of questions about the captain's private trade in curiosities

All the while

preposterous pe[illegible]

as glass, and that he could distinctly see the inverted face looking at him from the cabin beneath his feet

Pollock had a worse time almost on the steamer than he had at Sulyma All day he had to control himself in spite of his intense perception of the imminent presence of that horrible head that was overshadowing his mind At night his old nightmare returned, until, with a violent effort, he would force himself awake, rigid with the horror of it, and with the ghost of a hoarse scream in his throat

He left the actual head behind at Bathurst, where he changed ship for Teneriffe, but not his dreams nor the dull ache in his bones At Teneriffe Pollock transferred to a Cape liner, but the head followed him He gambled, he tried chess, he even read books but he knew the danger of drink Yet whenever a round black shadow, a round black object came into his range, there he looked for the head and—saw it He knew clearly enough that his imagination was growing traitor to him,

and yet at times it seemed the ship he sailed in his fellow passengers, the sailors, the wide sea, was all part of a filmy phantasmagoria that hung, scarcely veiling it, between him and a horrible real world Then the Porroh man, thrusting his diabolical face through that curtain, was the one real and undeniable thing At

. . . .

So, struggling grimly and silently with his excited imagination, Pollock reached England He landed at Southampton, and went on straight from Waterloo to his banker's in Cornhill in a cab There he transacted some business with the manager in a private room, and all the while the head hung like an ornament under the black marble mantel and dripped upon the fender He could hear the drops fall, and see the red on the fender

"A pretty fern ' said the manager following his eyes "But it makes the fender rusty '

"Very," said Pollock, "a *very* pretty fern And that reminds me Can you recommend me a physician for mind troubles? I've got a little—what is it?—hallucination"

The head laughed savagely wildly Pollock was surprised the manager did not notice it But the manager only stared at his face

With the address of a doctor, Pollock presently emerged in Cornhill There was no cab in sight, and so he went on down to the western end of the street, and essayed the crossing opposite the Mansion House The crossing is hardly easy even for the expert Londoner, cabs vans carriages, mail-carts omnibuses go by in one incessant stream, to anyone fresh from the malarious solitudes of Sierra Leone it is a boiling, maddening confusion But when an inverted head suddenly comes bouncing like an indiarubber ball, between your legs leaving distinct smears of blood every time it touches the ground, you can scarcely hope

to avoid an accident Pollock lifted his feet convulsively to avoid it, and then kicked at the thing furiously Then something hit him violently in the back, and a hot pain ran up his arm

He had been hit by the pole of an omnibus, and three of the fingers of his left hand smashed by the hoof of one of the horses—the very fingers, as it happened that he shot from the Porroh man They pulled him out from between the horses' legs, and found the address of the physician in his crushed hand

For a couple of days Pollock's sensations were full of the sweet, pungent smell of chloroform, of painful operations that caused him no pain, of lying still and being given food and drink Then he had a slight fever, and was very thirsty, and his old nightmare came back It was only when it returned that he noticed it had left him for a day

"If my skull had been smashed instead of my fingers, it might have gone altogether," said Pollock, staring thoughtfully at the dark cushion that had taken on for the time the shape of the head

Pollock at the first opportunity told the physician of his mind trouble He knew clearly that he must go mad unless something should intervene to save him He explained that he had witnessed a decapitation in Dahomey, and was haunted by one of the heads Naturally, he did not care to state the actual facts The physician looked grave

Presently he spoke hesitatingly "As a child, did you get very much religious training?"

"Very little," said Pollock

A shade passed over the physician's face "I don't know if you have heard of the miraculous cures—it may be, of course, they are not miraculous—at Lourdes"

"Faith healing will hardly suit me, I am afraid," said Pollock, with his eye on the dark cushion

The head distorted its scarred features in an abominable grimace The physician went upon a new track

"It's all imagination," he said speaking with sudden briskness "A fair case for faith heal ng anyhow Your nervous system has run down you re in that twi light state of health when the bogl s come easiest The strong impression was too much for you I must make you up a little mixture that will strengthen your nervous system—especially your brain And you must take exercise"

"I'm no good for faith healing said P llock

"*And therefore we must restore tone* Go n search of stimulating air—Scotland Norway the Alps —

"Jericho, if you like,' said Pollock—"where Naaman went"

However, so soon as his fingers would let him, Pollock made a gallant attempt to follow out the doctor's suggestion It was now Novemb r He tried football, but to Pollock the game cons sted in kicking a furious inverted head abo t a field He was no good at the game He kicked blindly w th a kind of horror, and when they put him back into goal and the ball came swooping down upon h m he s ddenly yelled and got out of *its way* *The discreditable stories that had* driven him from England to wander in the tropics shut him off from any but men s society and now his increasingly strange behaviour made even his man friends avoid him The thing was no longer a thing of the eye merely, it gibbered at him spoke to him A horrible fear came upon him that presently, when he took hold of the apparition, it would no longer become some mere article of furniture but would *feel* like a real d ssevered head Alone, he would curse at the thing defy it, entreat it once or twice, in spite of his grim self control, he addressed it in the presence of others He felt the growing susp c on in the eyes of the people that watched him—his landlady, the servant, his man

One day early in De ember his cousin Arnold—his next of kin—came to see him and draw him out and

watch his sunken yellow face with narrow eager eyes And it seemed to Pollock that the hat his cousin carried in his hand was no hat at all, but a Gorgon head that glared at him upside down, and fought with its eyes against his reason However, he was still resolute to see the matter out He got a bicycle, and, riding over the frosty road from Wandsworth to Kingston, found the thing rolling along at his side, and leaving a dark trail behind it He set his teeth and rode faster Then suddenly as he came down the hill towards Richmond Park the apparition rolled in front of him and under his wheel, so quickly that he had no time for thought, and turning quickly to avoid it, was flung violently against a heap of stones and broke his left wrist

The end came on Christmas morning All night he had been in a fever, the bandages encircling his wrist like a band of fire, his dreams more vivid and terrible than ever In the cold, colourles , uncertain light that came before the sunrise, he sat up in his bed, and saw the head upon the bracket in the place of the bronze jar that had stood there overnight

"I know that is a bronze jar," he said, with a chill doubt at his heart Presently the doubt was irresistible He got out of bed slowly, shivering and advanced to the jar with his hand raised Surely he would see now his imagination had deceived him, recognise the distinctive sheen of bronze At last, after an age of hesitation, his fingers came down on the patterned cheek of the head He withdrew them spasmodically The last stage was reached His sense of touch had betrayed him

Trembling stumbling against the bed, kicking against his shoes with his bare feet, a dark confusion eddying round him, he groped his way to the dressing table, took his razor from the drawer, and sat down on the bed with this in his hand In the looking glass he saw his own face, colourless, haggard, full of the ultimate bitterness of despair

He beheld in swift succession the incidents in the brief tale of his experience. His wretched home his still more wretched schooldays, the years of vicious life he had led since then, one act of selfish dishonour leading to another, it was all clear and pitiless now, all its squalid folly, in the cold light of the dawn He came to the hut, to the fight with the Porroh man to the retreat down the river to Sulyma, to the Mendi assassin and his red parcel, to his frantic endeavours to destroy the head, to the growth of his hallucination It was a hallucination! He *knew* it was A hallucination merely For a moment he snatched at hope He looked away from the glass, and on the bracket, the inverted head grinned and grimaced at him With the stiff fingers of his bandaged hand he felt at his neck for the throb of his arteries The morning was very cold, the steel blade felt like ice.



STORY THE NINTH

The Red Room

"I CAN assure you," said I, "that it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me" And I stood up before the fire with my glass in my hand

"It is your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm, and glanced at me askance

"Eight and twenty years," said I, "I have lived and never a ghost have I seen as yet"

The old woman sat staring hard into the fire, her pale eyes wide open "Ay," she broke in, "and eight and twenty years you have lived and never seen the likes of this house, I reckon There's a many things to see when one's still but eight and twenty" She swayed her head slowly from side to side "A many things to see and sorrow for"

I half suspected the old people were trying to enhance the spiritual terrors of their house by their droning insistence I put down my empty glass on the table and looked about the room and caught a glimpse of myself, abbreviated and broadened to an impossible sturdiness, in the queer old mirror at the end of the

room "Well," I said, "if I see anything to night, I shall be so much the wiser For I come to the business with an open mind"

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm once more

I heard the sound of a stick and a shambling step on the flags in the passage outside, and the door creaked on its hinges as a second old man entered more bent more wrinkled, more aged even than the first He supported himself by a single crutch his eyes were covered by a shade, and his lower lip, half averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying yellow teeth He made straight for an arm chair on the opposite side of the table, sat down clumsily, and began to cough The man with the withered arm gave this new comer a short glance of positive dislike, the old woman took no notice of his arrival, but remained with her eyes fixed steadily on the fire

"I said—it's your own choosing" said the man with the withered arm, when the coughing had ceased for a while

"It's my own choosing," I answered

The man with the shade became aware of my presence for the first time, and threw his head back for a moment and sideways, to see me I caught a momentary glimpse of his eyes, small and bright and inflamed Then he began to cough and splutter again

"Why don't you drink?" said the man with the withered arm, pushing the beer towards him The man with the shade poured out a glassful with a shaky arm that splashed half as much again on the deal table A monstrous shadow of him crouched upon the wall and mocked his action as he poured and drank I must confess I had scarce expected these grotesque custodians *There is to my mind something inhuman in senility* something crouching and atavistic the human qualities seem to drop from old people insensibly day by day The three of them made me feel uncomfortable, with

their gaunt silences, their bent carriage, their evident unfriendliness to me and to one another

"If," said I, "you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will make myself comfortable there"

The old man with the cough jerked his head back so suddenly that it startled me, and shot another glance of his red eyes at me from under the shade, but no one answered me I waited a minute, glancing from one to the other

"If," I said a little louder, "if you will show me to this haunted room of yours, I will relieve you *from the* task of entertaining me"

"There's a candle on the slab outside the door," said the man with the withered arm, looking at my feet as he addressed me "But if you go to the red room to night"—

("This night of all nights!" said the old woman)

"You go alone"

"Very well," I answered "And which way do I go?"

"You go along the passage for a bit," said he "until you come to a door, and through that is a spiral staircase, and half way up that is a landing and another door covered with baize Go through that and down the long corridor to the end, and the red room is on your left up the steps"

"Have I got that right?" I said, and repeated his directions He corrected me in one particular

"And are you really going?" said the man with the [illegible] with that

[illegible] an)

[illegible] towards the door As I did so, the old man with the shade rose and staggered round the table so as to be closer to the others and to the fire At the door I turned and looked at them, and saw they were all close together, dark against the firelight, staring at me over their

shoulders, with an intent expression on their ancient faces

"Good night," I said, setting the door open

"It's your own choosing, said the man with the withered arm

I left the door wide open until the candle was well alight, and then I shut them in and walked down the chilly, echoing passage

I must confess that the oddness of these three old pensioners in whose charge her ladyship had left the castle, and the deep toned, old fashioned furniture of the housekeeper's room in which they foregathered, affected me in spite of my efforts to keep myself at a matter-of fact phase They seemed to belong to another age, an older age, an age when things spiritual were different from this of ours, less certain, an age when omens and witches were credible, and ghosts beyond denying Their very existence was spectral, the cut of their clothing, fashions born in dead brains The ornaments and conveniences of the room about them were ghostly—the thoughts of vanished men, which still haunted rather than participated in the world of to-day But with an effort I sent such thoughts to the right about. The long draughty subterranean passage was chilly and dusty, and my candle flared and made the shadows cower and quiver The echoes rang up and down the spiral staircase and a shadow came sweeping up after me, and one fled before me into the darkness overhead I came to the landing and stopped there for a moment, listening to a rustling that I fancied I heard, then, satisfied of the absolute silence, I pushed open the baize-covered door and stood in the corridor

The effect was scarcely what I expected, for the moonlight, coming in by the great window on the grand staircase, picked out everything in vivid black shadow or silvery illumination Everything was in its place the house might have been deserted on the yesterday instead of eighteen months ago There were

candles in the sockets of the sconces and whatever dust had gathered on the carpets or upon the polished flooring was distributed so evenly as to be invisible in the moonlight I was about to advance, and stopped abruptly A bronze group stood upon the landing hidden from me by the corner of the wall, but its shadow fell with marvellous distinctness upon the white panelling, and gave me the impression of someone crouching to waylay me I stood rigid for half a minute perhaps Then, with my hand in the pocket that held my revolver, I advanced, only to discover a Ganymede and Eagle glistening in the moonlight That incident for a time restored my nerve, and a porcelain Chinaman on a buhl table, whose head rocked silently as I passed him scarcely startled me

The door to the red room and the steps up to it were in a shadowy corner I moved my candle from side to side, in order to see clearly the nature of the recess in which I stood before opening the door Here it was thought I, that my predecessor was found, and the memory of that story gave me a sudden twinge of apprehension I glanced over my shoulder at the Ganymede in the moonlight and opened the door of the red room rather hastily, with my face half turned to the pallid silence of the landing

I entered, closed the door behind me at once turned the key I found in the lock within, and stood with the candle held aloft surveying the scene of my vigil, the great red room of Lorraine Castle, in which the young duke had died Or, rather, in which he had begun his dying, for he had opened the door and fallen headlong down the steps I had just ascended That had been the end of his vigil, of his gallant attempt to conquer the ghostly tradition of the place, and never I thought, had apoplexy better served the ends of superstition And there were other and older stories that clung to the room, back to the half credible beginning of it all, the tale of a timid wife and the

tragic end that came to her husband's jest of frightening her And looking around that large shadowy room, with its shadowy window bays, its recesses and alcoves one could well understand the legends that had sprouted in its black corners, its germinating darkness My candle was a little tongue of flame in its vastness, that failed to pierce the opposite end of the room, and left an ocean of mystery and suggestion beyond its island of light

I resolved to make a systematic examination of the place at once, and dispel the fanciful suggestions of its obscurity before they obtained a hold upon me After satisfying myself of the fastening of the door, I began to walk about the room, peering round each article of furniture, tucking up the valances of the bed and opening its curtains wide I pulled up the blinds and examined the fastenings of the several windows before closing the shutters leant forward and looked up the blackness of the wide chimney, and tapped the dark oak panelling for any secret opening There were two big mirrors in the room, each with a pair of sconces bearing candles, and on the mantelshelf, too, were more candles in china candlesticks All these I lit one after the other The fire was laid —an unexpected *consideration from the old housekeeper,*—and I lit it, to keep down any disposition to shiver and when it was burning well, I stood round with my back to it and regarded the room again I had pulled up a chintz-covered arm chair and a table, to form a kind of barricade before me and on this lay my revolver ready to hand My precise examination had done me good, but I still found the remoter darkness of the place, and its perfect stillness too stimulating for the imagination The echoing of the stir and crackling of the fire was no sort of comfort to me The shadow in the alcove at the end in particular, had that undefinable quality of a presence that odd suggestion of a lurking living thing that comes so easily in silence

and solitude At last, to reassure myself, I walked with a candle into it, and satisfied myself that there was nothing tangible there I stood that candle upon the floor of the alcove, and left it in that position

By this time I was in a state of considerable nervous tension, although to my reason there was no adequate cause for the condition My mind, however, was perfectly clear I postulated quite unreservedly that nothing supernatural could happen, and to pass the time I began to string some rhymes together, Ingoldsby fashion, of the original legend of the place A few I spoke aloud, but the echoes were not pleasant For the same reason I also abandoned, after a time, a conversation with myself upon the impossibility of ghosts and haunting My mind reverted to the three old and distorted people downstairs, and I tried to keep it upon that topic The sombre reds and blacks of the room troubled me, even with seven candles the place was merely dim The one in the alcove flared in a draught and the fire flickering kept the shadows and penumbra perpetually shifting and stirring Casting about for a remedy, I recalled the candles I had seen in the passage, and, with a slight effort, walked out into the moonlight, carrying a candle and leaving the door open, and presently returned with as many as ten These I put in various knick knacks of china with which the room was sparsely adorned, lit and placed where the shadows had lain deepest, some on the floor, some in the window recesses, until at last my seventeen candles were so arranged that not an inch of the room but had the direct light of at least one of them It occurred to me that when the ghost came, I could warn him not to trip over them The room was now quite brightly illuminated There was something very cheery and reassuring in these little streaming flames, and snuffing them gave me an occupation, and afforded a reassuring sense of the passage of time

Even with that however, the brooding expectation

of the vigil weighed heavily upon me It was after midnight that the candle in the alcove suddenly went out, and the black shadow sprang back to its place I did not see the candle go out, I simply turned and [illegible] the matches from the table, I walked across the room in a leisurely manner to relight the corner again My first match would not strike, and as I succeeded with the second, something seemed to blink on the wall before me I turned my head involuntarily, and saw that the two candles on the little table by the fireplace were extinguished I rose at once to my feet

"Odd!" I said "Did I do that myself in a flash of absent mindedness?"

I walked back, relit one, and as I did so, I saw the candle in the right sconce of one of the mirrors wink and go right out, and almost immediately its companion followed it There was no mistake about it The flame vanished, as if the wicks had been suddenly nipped between a finger and a thumb, leaving the wick neither glowing nor smoking, but black While I stood gaping, the candle at the foot of the bed went out, and the shadows seemed to take another step towards me

"This won't do!" said I, and first one and then another candle on the mantelshelf followed

"What's up?" I cried, with a queer high note getting into my voice somehow At that the candle on the wardrobe went out, and the one I had relit in the alcove followed

"Steady on!" I said "These candles are wanted," speaking with a half hysterical facetiousness, and scratching away at a match the while for the mantel candlesticks My hands trembled so much that twice I missed the rough paper of the matchbox As the mantel emerged from darkness again, two candles in the remoter end of the window were eclipsed But with

the same match I also relit the larger mirror candles and those on the floor near the doorway, so that for the moment I seemed to gain on the extinctions But then in a volley there vanished four lights at once in different corners of the room, and I struck another match in quivering haste, and stood hesitating whither to take it

As I stood undecided, an invisible hand seemed to sweep out the two candles on the table With a cry of terror, I dashed at the alcove, then into the corner and then into the window, relighting three, as two more vanished by the fireplace, then, perceiving a better way, I dropped the matches on the iron bound deed box in the corner, and caught up the bedroom candlestick With this I avoided the delay of striking matches but for all that the steady process of extinction went on, and the shadows I feared and fought against returned and crept in upon me, first a step gained on this side of me and then on that It was like a ragged storm cloud sweeping out the stars Now and then one returned for a minute, and was lost again I was now almost frantic with the horror of coming darkness and my self possession deserted me I leaped panting and dishevelled from candle to candle, in a vain struggle against that remorseless advance

I bruised myself on the thigh against the table I sent a chair headlong, I stumbled and fell and whisked the cloth from the table in my fall My candle rolled away from me and I snatched another as I rose Abruptly this was blown out, as I swung it off the table, by the wind of my sudden movement and immediately the two remaining candles followed But there was light still in the room, a red light that staved off the shadows from me The fire! Of course I could thrust my candle between the bars and relight it!

I turned to where the flames were dancing between the glowing coals, and splashing red reflections upon

the furniture, made two steps towards the grate and incontinently the flames dwindled and vanished the glow vanished, the reflections rushed together and vanished, and as I thrust the candle between the bars darkness closed upon me like the [illegible] of an eye wrapped about me in a stifling embrace [illegible] my vision and crushed the last vestiges of [illegible] brain The candle fell from my hand [illegible] arms in a vain effort to thrust that pon[illegible] away from me, and, lifting up my voice [illegible] all my might—once, twice, thrice [illegible] must have staggered to my feet I kn[illegible] suddenly of the moonlit corridor, and, with [illegible] bowed and my arms over my face, made a run [illegible] *door*

But I had forgotten the exact position of the [illegible] and struck myself heavily against the corner [illegible] bed I staggered back, turned, and was either [illegible] or struck myself against some other bulky furn[illegible] I have a vague memory of battering myself thus [illegible] and fro in the darkness, of a cramped struggle, and [illegible] my own wild crying as I darted to and fro [illegible] heavy blow at last upon my forehead, a horri[illegible] sensation of falling that lasted an age, of my last fran[illegible] effort to keep my footing, and then I remember no more

I opened my eyes in daylight My head was roughly bandaged, and the man with the withered arm was watching my face I looked about me, trying to remember what had happened, and for a space I could not recollect I turned to the corner, and saw the old woman, no longer abstracted, pouring [illegible] some drops of medicine from a little blue phial into a glass "Where am I?" I asked "I seem to remember you, and yet I cannot remember who you are"

They told me then and I heard of the haunted Red Room as one who hears a tale 'We found you

at dawn," said he, "and there was blood on your forehead and lips"

It was very slowly I recovered my memory of my experience "You believe now," said the old man, "that the room is haunted?' He spoke no longer as one who greets an intruder, but as one who grieves for a broken friend

"Yes," said I, "the room is haunted"

"And you have seen it And we, who have lived here all our lives, have never set eyes upon it Because we have never dared Tell us, is it truly the old earl who"—

"No,' said I, "it is not"

"I told you so," said the old lady, with the glass in her hand "It is his poor young countess who was frightened"—

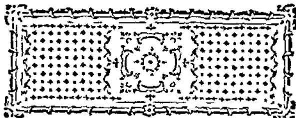
"It is not," I said "There is neither ghost of earl nor ghost of countess in that room, there is no ghost there at all, but worse, far worse"—

"Well?" they said

"The worst of all the things that haunt poor mortal man,' said I, "and that is, in all its nakedness—*Fear!* Fear that will not have light nor sound, that will not bear with reason, that deafens and darkens and overwhelms It followed me through the corridor, it fought against me in the room"—

I stopped abruptly There was an interval of silence My hand went up to my bandages

Then the man with the shade sighed and spoke "That is it," said he "I knew that was it A Power of Darkness To put such a curse upon a woman! It lurks there always You can feel it even in the daytime, even of a bright summer's day, in the hangings, in the curtains, keeping behind you however you face about In the dusk it creeps along the corridor and follows you, so that you dare not turn There is Fear in that room of hers—black Fear and there will be—so long as this house of sin endures"



STORY THE TENTH

The Cone

THE night was hot and overcast, the sky red-rimmed with the lingering sunset of mid summer They sat at the open window, trying to fancy the air was fresher there The trees and shrubs of the garden stood stiff and dark, beyond in the roadway a gas lamp burnt, bright orange against the hazy blue of the evening Farther were the three lights of the railway signal against the lowering sky The man and woman spoke to one another in low tones

"He does not suspect?" said the man, a little nervously

"Not he," she said peevishly, as though that too irritated her "He thinks of nothing but the works and the prices of fuel He has no imagination, no poetry"

"None of these men of iron have," he said sententiously "They have no hearts"

"*He* has not," she said She turned her discontented face towards the window The distant sound of a roaring and rushing drew nearer and grew in volume,

seemed to recover himself suddenly "Of course," he said 'I promised to show you the works under their proper dramatic conditions It's odd how I could have forgotten"

"If I am troubling you"—began Raut

Horrocks started again A new light had suddenly come into the sultry gloom of his eyes "Not in the least' he said

"Have you been telling Mr Raut of all these contrasts of flame and shadow you think so splendid?" said the woman, turning now to her husband for the first time, her confidence creeping back again, her voice just one half note too high "That dreadful theory of yours that machinery is beautiful, and everything else in the world ugly I thought he would not spare you Mr Raut It's his great theory, his one discovery in art"

"I am slow to make discoveries," said Horrocks grimly, damping her suddenly "But what I discover " He stopped

"Well?" she said

"Nothing" and suddenly he rose to his feet

"I promised to show you the works," he said to Raut, and put his big, clumsy hand on his friend's shoulder "And you are ready to go?"

"Quite," said Raut, and stood up also

There was another pause Each of them peered through the indistinctness of the dusk at the other two Horrock's hand still rested on Raut's shoulder Raut half fancied still that the incident was trivial after all But Mrs Horrocks knew her husband better, knew that grim quiet in his voice, and the confusion in her mind took a vague shape of physical evil "Very well," said Horrocks, and, dropping his hand, turned towards the door

"My hat?" Raut looked round in the half light

"That's my work basket," said Mrs Horrocks with a gust of hysterical laughter Their hands came together

on the back of the chair "Here it is!" he said She had an impulse to warn him in an undertone but she could not frame a word "Don't go!" and "Beware of him!" struggled in her mind, and the swift moment passed

"Got it?" said Horrocks, standing with the door half open

Raut stepped towards him "Better say good bye to Mrs Horrocks,' said the ironmaster, even more grimly quiet in his tone than before

Raut started and turned "Good evening, Mrs Horrocks," he said, and their hands touched

Horrocks held the door open with a ceremonial politeness unusual in him towards men Raut went out, and then, after a wordless look at her, her husband followed She stood motionless while Raut's light footfall and her husband's heavy tread like bass and treble, passed down the passage together The front door slammed heavily She went to the window, moving slowly, and stood watching—leaning forward The two men appeared for a moment at the gateway in the road, passed under the street lamp and were hidden by the black masses of the shrubbery The lamplight fell for a moment on their faces, showing only unmeaning pale patches, telling nothing of what she still feared, and doubted and craved vainly to know Then she sank down into a crouching attitude in the big arm chair her eyes wide open and staring out at the red lights from the furnaces that flickered in the sky An hour after she was still there, her attitude scarcely changed

The oppressive stillness of the evening weighed heavily upon Raut They went side by side down the road in silence, and in silence turned into the cinder made by way that presently opened out the prospect of the valley

A blue haze, half dust, half mist, touched the long valley with mystery Beyond were Hanley and Etruria,

grey and black masses, outlined thinly by the rare golden dots of the street-lamps, and here and there a gaslit window, or the yellow glare of some late working factory or crowded public-house Out of the masses clear and slender against the evening sky, rose a multitude of tall chimneys, many of them reeking, a few smokeless during a season of "plav" Here and there a pallid patch and ghostly stunted beehive shapes showed the position of a pot bank, or a wheel, black and sharp against the hot lower sky, marked some colliery where they raise the iridescent coal of the place Nearer at hand was the broad stretch of railway, and half invisible trains shunted—a steady puffing and rumbling with every now and then a ringing concussion and a series of impacts, and a passage of intermittent puffs of white steam across the further view And to the left, between the railway and the dark mass of the low hill beyond, dominating the whole view, colossal, inky black, and crowned with smoke and fitful flames, stood the great cylinders of the Jeddah Company Blast Furnaces, the central edifices of the big ironworks of which Horrocks was the manager They stood heavy and threatening, full of an incessant turmoil of flames and seething molten iron, and about the feet of them rattled the rolling mills, and the steam hammer beat heavily and splashed the white iron sparks hither and thither Even as they looked, a truckful of fuel was shot into one of the giants, and the red flames gleamed out, and a confusion of smoke and black dust came boiling upwards towards the sky

"Certainly you get some fine effects of colour with your furnaces," said Raut, breaking a silence that had become apprehensive

Horrocks grunted He stood with his hands in his pockets frowning down at the dim steaming railway and the busy ironworks beyond, frowning as if he were thinking out some knotty problem

Raut glanced at him and away again "At present

your moonlight effect is hardly ripe,' he continued, looking upward, "the moon is still smothered by the vestiges of daylight"

Horrocks stared at him with the expression of a man who has suddenly awakened "Vestiges of daylight? Of course, of course He too looked up at the moon, pale still in the midsummer sky Come along," he said suddenly and gripping Raut's arm in his hand made a move towards the path that dropped from them to the railway

Raut hung back Their eyes met and saw a thousand things in a moment that their lips came near to say Horrock's hand tightened and then relaxed He let go, and before Raut was aware of it, they were arm in arm and walking, one unwillingly enough down the path

'You see the fine effect of the railway signals towards Burslem' said Horrocks suddenly breaking into loquacity, striding fast and tightening the grip of his elbow the while Little green lights and red and white lights, all against the haze You have an eye for effect, Raut It's a fine effect And look at those furnaces of mine, how they rise upon us as we come down the hill *That to the right is my pet—seventy* feet of him I packed him myself, and he's boiled away cheerfully with iron in his guts for five long years *I've a particular fancy for him* That line of red there—a lovely bit of warm orange you'd call it, Raut—that's the puddlers' furnaces and there, in the hot light, three black figures—did you see the white splash of the steam hammer then?—that's the rolling mills Come along! Clang, clatter, how it goes rattling across the floor! Sheet tin, Raut,—amazing stuff Glass mirrors are not in it when that stuff comes from the mill And, squelch!—there goes the hammer again Come along!"

He had to stop talking to catch at his breath His arm twisted into Raut's with benumbing tightness He had come striding down the black path towards the railway as though he was possessed Raut had not

spoken a word, had simply hung back against Horrocks' pull with all his strength.

I say, he said, now laughing nervously, but with an unmistakable note of snarl in his voice, why on earth are you nipping my arm off, Horrocks, and dragging me along like this?

At length Horrocks released him. His manner changed again. Nipping your arm off? he said. Sorry. But it's you taught me the trick of walking in that friendly way.

You haven't learnt the refinements of it yet then, said Raut, laughing artificially again. By Jove! I'm black and blue. Horrocks offered no apology. They stood now near the bottom of the hill, close to the fence that bordered the railway. The ironworks had grown larger and spread out with their approach. They looked up to the blast furnaces now instead of down; the further view of Etruria and Hanley had dropped out of sight with their descent. Before them, by the stile, rose a notice-board, bearing, still dimly visible, the words, BEWARE OF THE TRAINS, half hidden by splashes of coaly mud.

Fine effects, said Horrocks, waving his arm. Here comes a train. The puffs of smoke, the orange glare, the round eye of light in front of it, the melodious rattle. Fine effects! But these furnaces of mine used to be finer, before we shoved cones in their throats and saved the gas.

How? said Raut. Cones?

Cones, my man, cones. I'll show you one nearer. The flames used to flare out of the open throats, great—what is it?—pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night. Now we run it off in pipes, and burn it to heat the blast, and the top is shut by a cone. You'll be interested in that cone.

But every now and then, said Raut, you get a burst of fire and smoke up there.

The cone's not fixed, it's hung by a chain from a

lever, and balanced by an equipoise You shall see it nearer Else, of course, there'd be no way of getting fuel into the thing Every now and then the cone dips, and out comes the flare"

"I see," said Raut He looked over his shoulder "The moon gets brighter," he said

"Come along," *said Horrocks abruptly, gripping his* shoulder again, and moving him suddenly towards the railway crossing And then came one of those swift incidents, vivid, but so rapid that they leave one doubtful and reeling *Halfway across, Horrocks's hand* suddenly clenched upon him like a vice, and swung him backward and through a half turn, so that he looked up the line And there a chain of lamp lit carriage windows telescoped swiftly as it came towards them, and the red and yellow lights of an engine grew larger and larger, rushing down upon them As he grasped what this meant, he turned his face to Horrocks, and pushed with all his strength against the arm that held him back between the rails The struggle did not last a moment Just as certain as it was that Horrocks *held him there, so certain was it that he had been* violently lugged out of danger

"Out of the way," said Horrocks, with a gasp, as the train came rattling by, and they stood panting by the gate into the ironworks

"*I did not see it coming,*" said Raut, still, *even in* spite of his own apprehensions, trying to keep up an appearance of ordinary intercourse

Horrocks answered with a grunt "The cone," he said, and then, as one who recovers himself, "I thought you did not hear"

"I didn't," said Raut

"I wouldn't have had you run over then for the world," said Horrocks

"For a moment I lost my nerve," said Raut

Horrocks stood for half a minute, then turned abruptly towards the ironworks again "See how fine

these great mounds of mine, these clinker heaps, look in the night! That truck yonder, up above there! Up it goes and out tilts the slag See the palpitating red stuff *go sliding down the slope* As *we get nearer*, the heap rises up and cuts the blast furnaces See the quiver up above the big one Not that way! This way, between the heaps That goes to the puddling furnaces, but I want to show you the canal first" He came and took Raut by the elbow, and so they went along side by side Raut answered Horrocks vaguely What, he asked him *self*, had really happened on the line? *Was he deluding* himself with his own fancies, or had Horrocks actually held him back in the way of the train? Had he just been within an ace of being murdered?

Suppose this slouching scowling monster *did* know anything? For a minute or two then Raut was really afraid for his life, but the mood passed as he reasoned with himself After all, Horrocks might *have heard* nothing At anyrate, he pulled him out of the way in time His odd manner might be due to the mere vague jealousy he had shown once before *He* was talking *now of* the ash *heaps* and the canal "Eigh?" said Horrocks

"What?" said Raut "Rather! The haze in the moonlight *Fine*!"

"Our canal,' said Horrocks stopping suddenly "Our canal by moonlight and firelight is an immense effect You've never seen it? Fancy that! *You've* spent too *many of your evenings philandering* up in Newcastle there I tell you, for real florid effects— But you shall see Boiling water "

As they came out of the labyrinth of clinker heaps and mounds of coal and ore, the noises of the rolling mill sprang upon them suddenly, loud, near, and distinct Three shadowy workmen went *by* and touched their caps to Horrocks Their faces were vague in the darkness Raut felt a futile impulse to address them, and before he could frame his words, *they*

passed into the shadows Horrocks pointed to the canal cl se before them now a weird looking place it seemed, in the blood red reflections of the furnaces The hot water that cooled the tuyères came into it, some fifty yards up—a tumultuous almost boiling affluent, and the steam rose up from the water in silent white wisps and streaks, wrapping damply about them an incessant succession of ghosts coming up from the black and red eddies, a white uprising that made the head swim The shining black tower of the larger blast furnace rose overhead out of the mist and its tumultuous riot filled their ears Raut kept away from the edge of the water and watched Horrocks

'Here it is red,' said Horrocks 'blood red vapour as red and hot as sin, but yonder there where the moon light falls on it, and it drives across the clinker heaps it is as white as death"

Raut turned his head for a moment, and then came back hastily to his watch on Horrocks "Come along to the rolling mills said Horrocks The threatening hold was not so evident that time and Raut felt a little reassured *But all the same what on earth did Horrocks* mean about "white as death and "red as sin'? Coincidence, perhaps?

They went and stood behind the puddlers for a little [illegible] ear, and they went and peeped through the little glass hole behind the tuyères, and saw the tumbled fire writhing in [illegible] It left one eye blinded [illegible] dancing [illegible] the truck[illegible] top of the big cylinder

And out upon the narrow rail that overhung the

furnace, Raut's doubts came upon him again Was it *wise to be here? If Horrocks did know—everything!* Do what he would, he could not resist a violent trembling Right under foot was a sheer depth of seventy feet *It was a dangerous place They pushed* by a truck of fuel to get to the railing that crowned the place The reek of the furnace, a sulphurous vapour streaked with pungent bitterness, seemed to make the distant hillside of Hanley quiver The moon was riding out now from among a drift of clouds, half way up the sky above the undulating wooded outlines of *Newcastle* The steaming canal ran away from below them under an indistinct bridge, and vanished into the dim haze of the flat fields towards Burslem

"That's the cone I've been telling you of," shouted Horrocks, "and, below that, sixty feet of fire and molten metal, with the air of the blast frothing through it like gas in soda water "

Raut gripped the hand rail tightly, and stared down at the cone The heat was intense The boiling of the iron and the tumult of the blast made a thunderous accompaniment to Horrocks's voice But the thing had to be gone through now Perhaps, after all

"*In the middle,*" bawled *Horrocks*, "temperature near a thousand degrees If *you* were dropped into it flash into flame like a pinch of gunpowder in a candle. *Put your hand out and feel the heat of his* breath Why, even up here I've seen the rain water boiling off the trucks And that cone there It's a damned sight too hot *for roasting cakes.* The top side of it's three hundred degrees"

"Three hundred degrees!" said Raut

"Three hundred *centigrade, mind!*" said Horrocks "It will boil the blood out of you in no time"

"Eigh!" said Raut, and turned

"Boil the blood out of you in No, you don't!"

"Let me go!" screamed Raut "Let go my arm!"

With one hand he clutched at the hand rail then

with both For a moment the two men stood swaying Then suddenly, with a violent jerk, Horrocks had twisted him from his hold He clutched at Horrocks and missed, his foot went back into empty air in mid-air he twisted himself, and then cheek and shoulder and knee struck the hot cone together

He clutched the chain by which the cone hung, and the thing sank an infinitesimal amount as he struck it. A circle of glowing red appeared about him and a tongue of flame, released from the chaos within flickered up towards him An intense pain assailed him at the knees, and he could smell the singeing of his hands He raised himself to his feet, and tried to climb up the chain, and then something struck his head Black and shining with the moonlight, the throat of the furnace rose about him

Horrocks, he saw, stood above him by one of the trucks of fuel on the rail The gesticulating figure was bright and white in the moonlight, and shouting, "Fizzle, you fool! Fizzle, you hunter of women! You hot blooded hound! Boil! boil! boil!"

Suddenly he caught up a handful of coal out of the truck, and flung it deliberately, lump after lump, at Raut

"Horrocks!" cried Raut "Horrocks!"

He clung crying to the chain, pulling himself up from the burning of the cone Each missile Horrocks flung hit him His clothes charred and glowed, and as he struggled the cone dropped, and a rush of hot suffocating gas whooped out and burned round him in a swift breath of flame

His human likeness departed from him When the momentary red had passed, Horrocks saw a charred, blackened figure, its head streaked with blood, still clutching and fumbling with the chain, and writhing in agony—a cindery animal an inhuman, monstrous creature that began a sobbing intermittent shriek

Abruptly, at the sight, the ironmaster's anger passed.

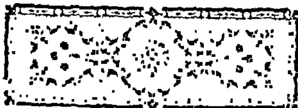
A deadly sickness came upon him The heavy odour of burning flesh came drifting up to his nostrils His sanity returned to him

"God have mercy upon me!" he cried "O God! what have I done?"

He kne [illegible] and felt [illegible] poor cre [illegible] realisation of that agony came to his mind, and [illegible] came every other feeling For a moment he stood irresolute and then, turning to the truck, he hastily tilted its contents upon the struggling thing that had once been a man The mass fell with a thud and went radiating over the cone With the thud the shriek ended, and a boiling confusion of smoke dust and flame came rushing up towards him As it passed, he saw the cone clear again

Then he staggered back, and stood trembling clinging to the rail with both hands His lips moved, but no words came to them

Down below was the sound of voices and running steps The clangour of rolling in the shed ceased abruptly



STORY THE ELEVENTH

The Purple Pileus

MR COOMBES was sick of life He walked away from his unhappy home, sick not only of his own existence, but of everybody else's, turned aside down Gaswork Lane to avoid the town, crossed the wooden bridge that goes over the canal to Starling's Cottages, and was presently alone in the damp pinewoods and out of sight and sound of human habitation He would stand it no longer He repeated aloud with blasphemies unusual to him that he would stand it no longer

He was a pale faced little man, with dark eyes and fine and very black moustache He had a very stiff, upright collar slightly frayed, that gave him an illusory double chin, and his overcoat (albeit shabby) was trimmed with astrachan His gloves were a bright brown with black stripes over the knuckles, and split at the finger ends His appearance, his wife had said once in the dear, dead days beyond recall,—before he married her, that is,—was military But now she called

him — It seems a dreadful thing to tell of between husband and wife, but she called him "a little grub" It wasn t the only thing she had called him, either

The row had arisen about that beastly Jennie again Jennie was his wife's friend, and by no invitation of Mr Coombes she came in every blessed Sundav to dinner, and made a shindy all the afternoon She was a big noisy girl, with a taste for loud colours and a strident laugh and this Sunday she had outdone all her previous intrusions by bringing in a fellow with her, a chap as showy as herself And Mr Coombes, in a starchy clean collar and his Sunday frock coat, had sat dumb and wrathful at his own table, while his wife and her guests talked foolishly and undesirably, and laughed aloud Well, he stood that, and after dinner (which, "as usual" was late) what must Miss Jennie do but go to the piano and play banjo tunes, for all the world as if it were a week day! Flesh and blood could not endure such goings on They would hear next door, they would hear in the road, it was a public announcement of their disrepute He had to speak

He had felt himself go pale, and a kind of rigour had affected his respiration as he delivered himself He had been sitting on one of the chairs by the window—the new guest had taken possession of the arm chair He turned his head "Sun Day!" he said over the collar, in the voice of one who warns "Sun Day!" What people call a "nasty" tone it was

Jennie had kept on playing, but his wife, who was looking through some music that was piled on the top of the piano, had stared at him "What's wrong now?" she said "can't people enjoy themselves?"

"I don't mind rational 'njoyment at all," said little Coombes, "but I ain't a going to have week-day tunes playing on a Sunday in this house"

"What's wrong with my playing now?" said Jennie, stopping and twirling round on the music-stool with a monstrous rustle of flounces

Coombes saw it was going to be a row and opened too vigorously, as is common with your timid nervous men all the world over "Steady on with that music-stool!" said he, "it ain't made for 'eavy weights

"Never you mind about weights' said Jennie, incensed "What was you saying behind my back about my playing?"

"Surely you don't 'old with not having a bit of music on a Sunday, Mr Coombes? said the new guest, leaning back in the arm-chair, blowing a cloud *of cigarette smoke and smiling in a kind of pitying* way And simultaneously his wife said something to Jennie about "Never mind im You go on, Jinny"

"I do," said Mr Coombes addressing the new guest

"May I arst why? said the new guest evidently enjoying both *his cigarette and the prospect* of an argument He was, by the bye, a lank young man very stylishly dressed in bright drab with a white cravat and a pearl and silver pin It had been better taste to come in a black coat, Mr Coombes thought

"Because,' began Mr Coombes, "it don't suit me I'm a business man I 'ave to study my connection Rational 'njoyment"—

"His connection!" said Mrs Coombes scornfully. "That's what he's always a saying We got to do this, and we got to do that"—

"If you don't mean to study my connection," said Mr Coombes, "what did you marry me for?

"I wonder," said Jennie, and turned back to the piano

"I never saw such a man as you," said Mrs Coombes "*You've altered all round since we were married* Before"—

Then Jennie began at the tum, tum, tum again

"Look here!" said Mr Coombes, driven at last to revolt standing up and raising his voice "I tell you I won't have that" The frock coat heaved with his indignation

"No vi'lence, now," said the long young man in drab, sitting up

"Who the juice are you?" said Mr Coombes fiercely

Whereupon they all began talking at once The new guest said he was Jennie's "intended," and meant to protect her, and Mr Coombes said he was welcome to do so anywhere but in his (Mr Coombes') house, and Mrs Coombes said he ought to be ashamed of insulting his guests, and (as I have already mentioned) that he was getting a regular little grub, and the end was, that Mr Coombes ordered his visitors out of the house and they wouldn't go, and so he said he would go himself With his face burning and tears of excitement in his eyes, he went into the passage, and as he struggled with his overcoat—his frock coat sleeves got concertinaed up his arm—and gave a brush at his silk hat Jennie began again at the piano, and strummed him insultingly out of the house Tum, tum, tum He slammed the shop door so that the house quivered That, briefly, was the immediate making of his mood You will perhaps begin to understand his disgust with existence

As he walked along the muddy path under the firs, —it was late October, and the ditches and heaps of fir needles were gorgeous with clumps of fungi—he recapitulated the melancholy history of his marriage. It was brief and commonplace enough He now perceived with sufficient clearness that his wife had married him out of a natural curiosity and in order to escape from her worrying, laborious and uncertain life in the workroom, and, like the majority of her class, she was far too stupid to realise that it was her duty to co operate with him in his business She was greedy of enjoyment, loquacious, and socially minded and evidently disappointed to find the restraints of poverty still hanging about her His worries exasperated her, and the slightest attempt to control her proceedings resulted in a charge of "grumbling" Why

couldn't he be nice—as he used to be? And Coombes was such a harmless little man, too nourished mentally on *Self Help*, and with a meagre ambition of self denial and competition that was to end in a "sufficiency." Then Jennie came in as a female *Mephistopheles*, a gabbling chronicle of "fellers" and was always wanting his wife to go to theatres and "all that." And in addition were aunts of his wife, and cousins (male and female), to eat up capital, insult him personally, upset business arrangements, annoy good customers, and generally blight his life. It was not the first occasion by many that Mr Coombes had fled his home in wrath and indignation and something like fear, vowing furiously and even aloud that he wouldn't stand it, and so frothing away his energy along the line of least resistance. But never before had he been quite so sick of life as on this particular Sunday afternoon. The Sunday dinner may have had its share in his despair—and the greyness of the sky. Perhaps, too, he was beginning to realise his unendurable frustration as a business man as the consequence of his marriage. Presently bankruptcy, and after that— Perhaps she might have reason to repent when it was too late. And destiny, as I have already intimated, had planted the path through the wood with evil-smelling fungi, thickly and variously planted it, not only on the right side but on the left.

A small shopman is in such a melancholy position if his wife turns out a disloyal partner. His capital is all tied up in his business, and to leave her, means to join the unemployed in some strange part of the earth. The luxuries of divorce are beyond him altogether. So that the good old tradition of marriage for better or worse holds inexorably for him, and things work up to tragic culminations. Bricklayers kick their wives to death, and dukes betray theirs, but it is among the small clerks and shopkeepers nowadays that it comes most often to a cutting of throats. Under the circumstances it is not so very remarkable—and you must take

it as charitably as you can—that the mind of Mr Coombes ran for a while on some such glorious close to his disappointed hopes, and that he thought of razors, pistols, bread knives, and touching letters to the coroner denouncing his enemies by name, and praying piously for forgiveness After a time his fierceness gave way to melancholia He had been married in this very overcoat, in his first and only frock coat that was buttoned up beneath it He began to recall their courting along this very walk, his years of penurious saving to get capital, and the bright hopefulness of his marrying days For it all to work out like this! Was there no sympathetic ruler anywhere in the world? He reverted to death as a topic

He thought of the canal he had just crossed, and doubted whether he shouldn't stand with his head out, even in the middle, and it was while drowning was in his mind that the purple pileus caught his eye He looked at it mechanically for a moment, and stopped and stooped towards it to pick it up under the impression that it was some such small leather object as a purse Then he saw that it was the purple top of a fungus, a peculiarly poisonous looking purple slimy, shiny, and emitting a sour odour He hesitated with his hand an inch or so from it, and the thought of poison crossed his mind With that he picked the thing and stood up again with it in his hand

The odour was certainly strong—acrid, but by no means disgusting He broke off a piece, and the fresh surface was a creamy white, that changed like magic in the space of ten seconds to a yellowish green colour It was even an inviting looking change He broke off two other pieces to see it repeated They were wonderful things these fungi, thought Mr Coombes, and all of them the deadliest poisons, as his father had often told him Deadly poisons!

There is no time like the present for a rash resolve Why not here and now? thought Mr Coombes He

tasted a little piece, a very little piece indeed—a mere crumb. It was so pungent that he almost spat it out again, then merely hot and full flavoured: a kind of German mustard with a touch of horse-radish and—well, mushroom. He swallowed it in the excitement of the moment. Did he like it or did he not? His mind was curiously careless. He would try another bit. It really wasn't bad—it was good. He forgot his troubles in the interest of the immediate moment. Playing with death it was. He took another bite, and then deliberately finished a mouthful. A curious tingling sensation began in his finger-tips and toes. His pulse began to move faster. The blood in his ears sounded like a mill-race. "Try bi' more," said Mr. Coombes. He turned and looked about him, and found his feet unsteady. He saw and struggled towards a little patch of purple a dozen yards away. "Jol' goo' stuff," said Mr. Coombes. "E—lo more ye." He pitched forward and fell on his face, his hands outstretched towards the cluster of pilei. But he did not eat any more of them. He forgot forthwith.

He rolled over and sat up with a look of astonishment on his face. His carefully brushed silk hat had rolled away towards the ditch. He pressed his hand to his brow. Something had happened, but he could not rightly determine what it was. Anyhow, he was no longer dull—he felt bright, cheerful. And his throat was afire. He laughed in the sudden gaiety of his heart. Had he been dull? He did not know; but at anyrate he would be dull no longer. He got up and stood unsteadily, regarding the universe with an agreeable smile. He began to remember. He could not remember very well, because of a steam roundabout that was beginning in his head. And he knew he had been disagreeable at home, just because they wanted to be happy. They were quite right; life should be as gay as possible. He would go home and make it up and reassure them. And why not take some of this delight

ful toadstool with him, for them to eat? A hatful, no less Some of those red ones with white spots as well, and a few yellow He had been a dull dog, an enemy to merriment he would make up for it It would be gay to turn his coat sleeves inside out, and stick some yellow gorse into his waistcoat pockets Then home —singing—for a jolly evening

After the departure of Mr Coombes, Jennie dis continued playing and turned round on the music stool again "What a fuss about nothing," said Jennie.

'You see Mr Clarence, what I've got to put up with said Mrs Coombes

"He is a bit hasty," said Mr Clarence judicially

"He ain't got the slightest sense of our position," said Mrs Coombes "that's what I complain of He cares for nothing but his old shop, and if I have a bit of company, or buy anything to keep myself decent, or get any little thing I want out of the housekeeping money, there's disagreeables 'Economy,' he says 'struggle for life,' and all that He lies awake of nights about it, worrying how he can screw me out of a shilling He wanted us to eat Dorset butter once If once I was to give in to him—there!"

"Of course,' said Jennie

"If a man values a woman," said Mr Clarence, lounging back in the arm chair, "he must be prepared to make sacrifices for her For my own part," said Mr Clarence, with his eye on Jennie, "I shouldn't think of marrying till I was in a position to do the thing in style It's downright selfishness A man ought to go through the rough and tumble by himself, and not drag her"—

"I don't agree altogether with that," said Jennie "I don't see why a man shouldn't have a woman's help, provided he doesn't treat her meanly, you know It's meanness"—

"You wouldn't believe," said Mrs Coombes "But

I was a fool to ave 'im I might ave kn wn If it 'adn't been *for my father* we shouldn t ha e I ad not a carriage to our wedding

"Lord! he didn t stick out at that?' said M Clarence, quite shocked

"*Said he wanted* the money for his stock or some such rubbish Why he wouldn t have a woman in to help me once a week if it wasn t for my stand ng out plucky And the fusses he makes about money —*comes to me*, well, pretty near crying with sheets of paper and figgers 'If only we can tide over this year,' he says, 'the business is bound to go If only we can tide over this year, I says then it ll be if *only* we can tide over next year I know you I says 'And you don't catch me screwing myself lean and ugly Why didn t you marry a slavey? I says 'if you wanted one—instead of a respectable girl, I *says*"

So Mrs Coombes But we will not follow this unedifying conversation further Suffice it that Mr Coombes was very satisfactorily disposed of and they had a snug little time round the fire Then Mrs Coombes went to get the tea and Jennie sat coquet tishly on the arm of Mr Clarence s chair until the tea things clattered outside What was that I heard?" asked Mrs Coombes playfully, as she entered and there was badinage about kissing They were just sitting down to the little circular table when the first intimation of Mr Coombes' return was heard

This was a fumbling *at the latch of the front door*

"'Ere's my lord,' said Mrs Coombes 'Went out like a lion and comes back like a lamb, I ll lay'

Something fell over in the shop a chair it sounded *like* Then there *was a sound as of some complicated* step exercise in the passage Then the door opened and Coombes appeared But it was Coombes trans figured The immaculate collar had been torn care *lessly from his throat His carefully brushed silk hat*,

half full of a crush of fungi, was under one arm, his coat was inside out, and his waistcoat adorned with bunches of yellow-blossomed furze. These little eccentricities of Sunday costume, however, were quite overshadowed by the change in his face, it was livid white, his eyes were unnaturally large and bright, and his pale blue lips were drawn back in a cheerless grin. "Merry!" he said. He had stopped dancing to open the door. "Rational 'njoyment. Dance." He made three fantastic steps into the room, and stood bowing.

"Jim!" shrieked Mrs. Coombes, and Mr. Clarence sat petrified, with a dropping lower jaw.

"Tea," said Mr. Coombes. "Jol' thing, tea. Tose-stools too. Brosher."

"He's drunk," said Jennie in a weak voice. Never before had she seen this intense pallor in a drunken man, or such shining, dilated eyes.

Mr. Coombes held out a handful of scarlet agaric to Mr. Clarence. "Jo' stuff," said he; "ta' some."

At that moment he was genial. Then at the sight of their startled faces he changed, with the swift transition of insanity, into overbearing fury. And it seemed as if he had suddenly recalled the quarrel of his departure. In such a huge voice as Mrs. Coombes had never heard before, he shouted, "My house. I'm master 'ere. Eat what I give yer!" He bawled this, as it seemed, without an effort, without a violent gesture, standing there as motionless as one who whispers, holding out a handful of fungus.

Clarence approved himself a coward. He could not meet the mad fury in Coombes' eyes; he rose to his feet, pushing back his chair, and turned, stooping. At that Coombes rushed at him. Jennie saw her opportunity, and, with the ghost of a shriek, made for the door. Mrs. Coombes followed her. Clarence tried to dodge. Over went the tea-table with a smash as Coombes clutched him by the collar and tried to thrust the fungus into his mouth. Clarence was

content to leave his collar behind him, and shot out into the passage with red patches of fly agaric still adherent to his face "Shut im in!" cried Mrs Coombes, and would have closed the door but her supports deserted her, Jennie saw the shop door open, and vanished thereby, locking it behind her, while Clarence went on hastily into the kitchen Mr Coombes came heavily against the door, and Mrs Coombes, finding the key was inside, fled upstairs and locked herself in the spare bedroom

So the new convert to *joie de vivre* emerged upon the passage, his decorations a little scattered, but that respectable hatful of fungi still under his arm He hesitated at the three ways, and decided on the kitchen Whereupon Clarence, who was fumbling with the key, gave up the attempt to imprison his host, and fled into the scullery, only to be captured before he could open the door into the yard Mr Clarence is singularly reticent of the details of what occurred It seems that Mr Coombes' transitory irritation had vanished again, and he was once more a genial playfellow And as there were knives and meat choppers about, Clarence very generously resolved to humour him and so avoid anything tragic It is beyond dispute that Mr Coombes played with Mr Clarence to his heart's content, they could not have been more playful and familiar if they had known each other for years He insisted gaily on Clarence trying the fungi, and after a friendly tussle, was smitten with remorse at the mess he was making of his guest's face It also appears that Clarence was dragged under the sink and his face scrubbed with the blacking brush,—he being still resolved to humour the lunatic at any cost,—and that finally, in a somewhat dishevelled, chipped, and discoloured condition, he was assisted to his coat and shown out by the back door, the shopway being barred by Jennie Mr Coombes' wandering thoughts then turned to Jennie. Jennie had been unable to unfasten the shop door,

but she shot the bolts against Mr Coombes latch key and remained in possession of the shop for the rest of the evening

It would appear that Mr Coombes then returned to the kitchen still in pursuit of gaiety, and, albeit a strict Good Templar, drank (or spilt down the front of the first and only frock coat) no less than five bottles of the [illegible]

[illegible]

shed in this story,—and what with that, and the systematic convulsion of his inexperienced physiology by the liquorish brand of Mrs Coombes' stout, it may be the evil of the fungus poison was somehow allayed But we prefer to draw a veil over the concluding incidents of this Sunday afternoon They ended in the coal cellar, in a deep and healing sleep

An interval of five years elapsed Again it was a Sunday afternoon in October, and again Mr Coombes walked through the pinewood beyond the canal He was still the same dark eyed, black moustached little man that he was at the outset of the story, but his double chin was now scarcely so illusory as it had been His overcoat was new, with a velvet lapel, and a stylish collar with turn down corners, free of any coarse starchiness, had replaced the original all round article His hat was glossy, his gloves newish—though one finger had split and been carefully mended And a casual observer would have noticed about him a certain rectitude of bearing, a certain erectness of head that marks the man who thinks well of himself He was a master now, with three assistants Beside him walked a larger sunburnt parody of himself, his brother Tom, just back from Australia They were recapitulating their early

struggles, and Mr Coombes had just been making a financial statement

"It's a very nice little business Jim" said brother Tom "In these days of competition you're jolly lucky to have worked it up so And you're jolly lucky too to have a wife who's willing to help like yours does"

"Between ourselves" said Mr Coombes "it wasn't always so It wasn't always like this To begin with the missus was a bit giddy Girl's are funny creatures"

"Dear me!"

"Yes You'd hardly think it but she was downright extravagant, and always having slaps at me I was a bit too easy and loving, and all that, and she thought the whole blessed show was run for her Turned the 'ouse into a regular caravansery, always having her relations and girls from business in and their chaps Comic songs a' Sunday, it was getting to and driving trade away And she was making eyes at the chaps, too! I tell you, Tom, the place wasn't my own"

"Shouldn't 'a' thought it"

"It was so Well—I reasoned with her I said, 'I ain't a duke, to keep a wife like a pet animal I married you for 'elp and company' I said, 'You got to 'elp and pull the business through' She wouldn't 'ear of it 'Very well,' I says, 'I'm a mild man man till I'm roused,' I says, 'and it's getting to that' But she wouldn't 'ear of no warnings"

"Well?"

"It's the way with women. She didn't think I 'ad it in me to be roused Women of her sort (between ourselves Tom) don't respect a man until they're a bit afraid of him So I just broke out to show her In comes a girl named Jennie, that used to work with her, and her chap We 'ad a bit of a row and I came out 'ere—it was just such another day as this—and I thought it all out Then I went back and pitched into them"

"You did?"

"I did I was mad, I can tell you I wasn't going

to 'it 'er, if I could 'elp it, so I went back and licked into this chap, just to show 'er what I could do 'E was a big chap, too Well, I chucked him, and smashed things about, and gave 'er a scaring, and she ran up and locked 'erself into the spare room"

"Well?"

"That's all I says to 'er the next morning, 'Now you know,' I says, 'what I'm like when I'm roused' And I didn't 'ave to say anything more"

"And you've been happy ever after, eh?"

"So to speak There's nothing like putting your foot down with them If it 'adn't been for that afternoon I should 'a' been tramping the roads now, and she'd 'a' been grumbling at me, and all her family grumbling for bringing her to poverty—I know their little ways But we're all right now And it's a very decent little business as you say"

They proceed on their way meditatively "Women are funny creatures," said brother Tom

"They want a firm hand" says Coombes

"What a lot of these funguses there are about here!" remarked brother Tom presently "I can't see what use they are in the world"

Mr Coombes looked "I dessay they're sent for some wise purpose," said Mr Coombes

And that was as much thanks as the purple pileus ever got for maddening this absurd little man to the pitch of decisive action, and so altering the whole course of his life.

STORY THE TWELFTH

The Jilting of Jane

AS I sit writing in my study, I can hear our Jane bumping her way downstairs with a brush and dustpan. She used in the old days to sing hymn tunes, or the British national song for the time being, to these instruments, but latterly she has been silent and even careful over her work. Time was when I prayed with fervour for such silence, and my wife with sighs for such care, but now they have come we are not so glad as we might have anticipated we should be. Indeed, I would rejoice secretly, though it may be unmanly weakness to admit it, even to hear Jane sing "Daisy," or by the fracture of any plate but one of Euphemia's best green ones, to learn that the period of brooding has come to an end.

Yet how we longed to hear the last of Jane's young man before we heard the last of him! Jane was always very free with her conversation to my wife, and discoursed admirably in the kitchen on a variety of topics—so well, indeed, that I sometimes left my study door

open—our house is a small one—to partake of it But after William came, it was always William, nothing but William William this and William that, and when we thought William was worked out and exhausted altogether, then William all over again The engagement lasted altogether three years, yet how she got introduced to William and so became thus saturated with him was always a secret For my part, I believe it was at the street corner where the Rev Barnabas Baux used to hold an open air service after evensong on Sundays Young Cupids were wont to flit like moths round the paraffin flare of that centre of High Church hymn-singing I fancy she stood singing hymns there, out of memory and her imagination instead of coming home to get supper and William came up beside her and said 'Hello!' "Hello yourself!" she said, and etiquette being satisfied they proceeded to converse

As Euphemia has a reprehensible way of letting her servants talk to her, she soon heard of him 'He is *such* a respectable young man, ma'am," said Jane, "you don't know" Ignoring the slur cast on her acquaintance my wife inquired further about this William

"He is second porter at Maynard's the draper's" said Jane "and gets eighteen shillings—nearly a pound—a week, m'm, and when the head porter leaves he will be head porter His relatives are quite superior people m'm Not labouring people at all His father was a greengrosher, m'm and had a chumor, and he was bankrup' twice And one of his sisters is in a Home for the Dying It will be a very good match for me m'm" said Jane "me being an orphan girl"

'Then you are engaged to him?" asked my wife

"Not engaged, ma'am but he is saving money to buy a ring—hammyfist"

"Well, Jane when you are properly engaged to him you may ask him round here on Sunday afternoons and have tea with him in the kitchen" For my Euphemia has a motherly conception of her duty towards her maid

servants And presently the amethystine ring was being worn about the house, even with ostentation, and Jane developed a new way of bringing in the joint, so that this gage was evident The elder Miss Maitland was aggrieved by it, and told my wife that servants ought not to wear rings But my wife looked it up in *Enquire Within* and *Mrs Motherly's Book of Household Management*, and found no prohibition So Jane remained with this happiness added to her love

The treasure of Jane's heart appeared to me to be what respectable people call a very deserving young man "William, ma am," said Jane one day suddenly, with ill-concealed complacency, as she counted out the beer bottles, "William, ma am, is a teetotaller Yes m'm; and he don t smoke Smoking ma am," said Jane, as one who reads the heart, "*do* make such a dust about Beside the waste of money *And* the smell However, I suppose it s necessary to some"

Possibly it dawned on Jane that she was reflecting a little severely upon Euphemia's comparative ill fortune and she added kindly, I m sure the master is a hangel when his pipe's alight Compared to other times"

William was at first a rather shabby young man of the ready made black coat school of costume He had watery grey eyes, and a complexion appropriate to the brother of one in a Home for the Dying Euphemia did not fancy him very much, even at the beginning His eminent respectability was vouched for by an alpaca umbrella, from which he never allowed himself to be parted

"He goes to chapel," said Jane "His papa, ma'am "—

"His *what* Jane?"

"His papa, ma'am was Church, but Mr Maynard is a Plymouth Brother, and William thinks it Policy, ma'am, to go there too Mr Maynard comes and talks to him quite friendly, when they ain't busy, about

using up all the ends of string, and about his soul He takes a lot of notice, do Maynard, of William, and the way he saves string and his soul, ma'am'

Presently we heard that the head porter at Maynard's had left, and that William was head porter at twenty-three shillings a week "He is really kind of over the man who drives the van," said Jane, "and him married with three children" And she promised in the pride of her heart to make interest for us with William to favour us so that we might get our parcels of drapery from Maynard's with exceptional promptitude

After this promotion a rapidly increasing prosperity came upon Jane's young man One day, we learned that Mr Maynard had given William a book "Smiles' Elp Yourself, it's called," said Jane, "but it ain't comic It tells you how to get on in the world, and some what William read to me was *lovely* ma'am"

Euphemia told me of this laughing, and then she became suddenly grave "Do you know dear," she said, "Jane said one thing I did not like She had been quiet for a minute and then she suddenly remarked, 'William is a lot above me, ma'am, ain t he?'"

"I don't see anything in that," I said, though later my eyes were to be opened

One Sunday afternoon about that time I was sitting at my writing desk—possibly I was reading a good book—when a something went by the window I heard a startled exclamation behind me, and saw Euphemia with her hands clasped together and her eyes dilated "George," she said in an awestricken whisper, 'did you see?"

Then we both spoke to one another at the same moment, slowly and solemnly "*A silk hat! Yellow gloves! A new umbrella!*"

"It may be my fancy, dear," said Euphemia, "but his tie was very like yours I believe Jane keeps him in ties She told me a little while ago in a way that implied volumes about the rest of your costume, 'The

master *do* wear pretty ties, ma'am' And he echoes all your novelties"

The young couple passed our window again on their way to their customary walk They were arm in arm Jane looked exquisitely proud, happy, and uncomfortable, with new white cotton gloves, and William, in the silk hat, singularly genteel!

That was the culmination of Jane's happiness when she returned, "Mr Maynard has been talking to William, ma'am," she said, "and he is to serve customers, just like the young shop gentlemen, during the next sale And if he gets on, he is to be made an assistant, ma'am, at the first opportunity He has got to be as gentlemanly as he can, ma'am, and if he ain't, ma'am, he says it won't be for want of trying Mr Maynard has took a great fancy to him"

"He is getting on, Jane," said my wife

"Yes, ma'am," said Jane thoughtfully, "he *is* getting on"

And she sighed

That next Sunday, as I drank my tea, I interrogated my wife "How is this Sunday different from all other Sundays, little woman? What has happened? Have you altered the curtains, or rearranged the furniture, or where is the indefinable difference of it? Are you wearing your hair in a new way without warning me? I clearly perceive a change in my environment, and I cannot for the life of me say what it is"

Then my wife answered in her most tragic voice, "George," she said, "that—that William has not come near the place to-day! And Jane is crying her heart out upstairs"

There followed a period of silence Jane, as I have said, stopped singing about the house, and began to care for our brittle possessions, which struck my wife as being a very sad sign indeed The next Sunday, and the next, Jane asked to go out, "to walk with William," and my wife, who never attempts to extort confidences,

gave her permission, and asked no questions On each occasion Jane came back looking flushed and very determined At last one day she became communicative

"William is being led away," she remarked abruptly, with a catching of the breath, apropos of tablecloths "Yes, ma'am She is a milliner, and she can play on the piano"

"I thought," said my wife, "that you went out with him on Sunday"

"Not out with him, m'm—after him I walked along by the side of them, and told her he was engaged to me"

"Dear me, Jane, did *you*? What did they do?"

"Took no more notice of me than if I was dirt So I told her she should suffer for it"

"It could not have been a very agreeable walk, Jane"

"Not for no parties, ma'am"

"I wish," said Jane, "I could play the piano, ma'am But anyhow, I don't mean to let *her* get him away from me She's older than him, and her hair ain't gold to the roots, ma'am"

It was on the August Bank Holiday that the crisis came We do not clearly know the details of the fray, but only such fragments as poor Jane let fall She came home dusty, excited, and with her heart hot within her

The milliner's mother, the milliner, and William had made a party to the Art Museum at South Kensington, I think Anyhow, Jane had calmly but firmly accosted them somewhere in the streets, and asserted her right to what, in spite of the consensus of literature she held to be her inalienable property She did, I think, go so far as to lay hands on him They dealt with her in a crushingly superior way They "called a cab" There was a "scene," William being pulled away into the four wheeler by his future wife and mother in law from the reluctant hands of our discarded Jane There were threats of giving her "in charge"

"My poor Jane!" said my wife, mincing veal as though she was mincing William "It's a shame of them I would *think no more of him* He is not worthy of you"

"No, m'm," said Jane "He *is* weak"

"But it's that woman has done it," said Jane She was never known to bring herself to pronounce "that woman's" name or to admit her girlishness "I can't think what minds some women must have—to try and get a girl's young man away from her But there, it only hurts to talk about it," said Jane

Thereafter our house rested from William But there was something in the manner of Jane's scrubbing the front doorstep or sweeping out the rooms, a certain viciousness, that persuaded me that the story had not yet ended

"Please, m'm, may I go and see a wedding to morrow?" said Jane one day

My wife knew by instinct whose wedidng "Do you think it is wise, Jane?" she said

"I would like to see the last of him," said Jane

"My dear," said my wife, fluttering into my room about twenty minutes after Jane had started, "Jane has been to the boot hole and taken all the left off boots and shoes, and gone off to the wedding with them in a bag Surely she cannot mean"—

"Jane," I said, "is developing character Let us hope for the best"

Jane came back with a pale, hard face All the boots seemed to be still in her bag, at which my wife heaved a premature sigh of relief We heard her go upstairs and replace the boots with considerable emphasis

"Quite a crowd at the wedding, ma'am," she said *presently, in a purely conversational style, sitting in our* little kitchen, and scrubbing the potatoes, "and such a lovely day for them" She proceeded to numerous other details, clearly avoiding some cardinal incident

"It was all extremely respectable and nice, ma'am,

but *her* father didn't wear a black coat, and looked quite out of place, ma'am Mr Piddingquirk"—

"*Who?*"

"Mr Piddingquirk—William that *was*, ma'am—had white gloves and a coat like a clergyman, and a lovely chrysanthemum He looked so nice, ma'am And there was red carpet down, just like for gentlefolks And they say he gave the clerk four shillings, ma'am It was a real kerridge they had—not a fly When they came out of church there was rice throwing, and her two little sisters dropping dead flowers And someone threw a slipper, and then I threw a boot"—

"Threw a *boot* Jane!"

"Yes ma'am Aimed at *her* But it hit *him* Yes, ma'am, hard Gev him a black eye, I should think I only threw that one I hadn't the heart to try again All the little boys cheered when it hit him"

After an interval—"I am sorry the boot hit *him*"

Another pause The potatoes were being scrubbed violently "He always *was* a bit above me, you know, ma'am And he was led away"

The potatoes were more than finished Jane rose sharply with a sigh, and rapped the basin down on the table

"I don't care," she said "I don't care a rap He will find out his mistake yet It serves me right I was stuck up about him I ought not to have looked so high And I am glad things are as things are"

My wife was in the kitchen, seeing to the cookery After the confession of the boot throwing, she must have watched poor Jane fuming with a certain dismay in those brown eyes of hers But I imagine they softened again very quickly, and then Jane's must have met them

"Oh, ma'am," said Jane, with an astonishing change of note, "think of all that *might* have been! Oh, ma'am, I c'd have been so happy! I ought to have known but I didn't know . . . You're very kind to

let me talk to you, ma'am . . for it's hard on me, ma'am . . . it's har r r r d "—

And I gather that Euphemia so far forgot herself as to let Jane sob out some of the fulness of her heart on a sympathetic shoulder My Euphemia, thank Heaven, has never properly grasped the importance of "keeping up her position" And since that fit of weeping, much of the accent of bitterness has gone out of Jane's scrubbing and brush work

Indeed, something passed the other day with the butcher boy—but that scarcely belongs to this story However, Jane is young still, and time and change are at work with her We all have our sorrows but I do not believe very much in the existence of sorrows that never heal.



STORY THE THIRTEENTH

In the Modern Vein an Unsympathetic Love Story

OF course the cultivated reader has heard of Aubrey Vair He has published on three several occasions volumes of delicate verses,—some, indeed, border on indelicacy —and his column "Of Things Literary" in the *Climax* is well known His Byronic visage and an interview have appeared in the *Perfect Lady* It was Aubrey Vair I believe, who demonstrated that the humour of Dickens was worse than his sentiment and who detected "a subtle bourgeois flavour" in Shakespeare However, it is not generally known that Aubrey Vair has had erotic experiences as well as erotic inspirations He adopted Gœthe some little time since as his literary prototype and that may have had something to do with his temporary lapse from sexual integrity

For it is one of the commonest things that undermine literary men, giving us landslips and picturesque effects along the otherwise even cliff of their respectable *life*, ranking next to avarice, and certainly above drink this instability called genius, or, more fully, the consciousness of genius, such as Aubrey Vair possessed Since Shelley

set the fashion, your man of gifts has been assured that his duty to himself and his duty to his wife are incompatible, and his renunciation of the Philistine has been *marked by such infidelity as his means and courage* warranted Most virtue is lack of imagination At any rate, a minor genius without his affections twisted into an inextricable muddle, and who did not occasionally shed sonnets over his troubles, I have never met

Even Aubrey Vair did this, weeping the sonnets over night into his blotting book, and pretending to write literary *causerie* when his wife came down in her bath slippers to see what kept him up She did not understand him, of course He did this even before the other woman appeared, so ingrained is conjugal treachery in the talented mind Indeed, he wrote more sonnets before the other woman came than after that event, because thereafter he spent much of his leisure in cutting down the old productions, retrimming them, and generally altering this ready-made clothing of his passion to suit her particular height and complexion

Aubrey Vair lived in a little red villa with a lawn at the back and a view of the Downs behind Reigate He *lived upon discreet investment eked out by literary work* His wife was handsome, sweet, and gentle, and—such is the tender humility of good married women—she found her life's happiness in seeing that little Aubrey Vair had *well cooked variety for dinner, and that their house was* the neatest and brightest of all the houses they entered Aubrey Vair enjoyed the dinners, and was proud of the house, yet nevertheless he mourned because his genius dwindled Moreover, he grew plump, and corpulence threatened him

We learn in suffering what we teach in song, and Aubrey Vair knew certainly that his soul could give no creditable crops unless his affections were harrowed And how to harrow them was the trouble, for Reigate is a moral neighbourhood

So Aubrey Vair's romantic longings blew loose for a

time, much as a seedling creeper might, planted in the midst of a flower bed But at last, in the fulness of time the other woman came to the embrace of Aubrey Vair s yearning heart tendrils and his romantic episode proceeded as is here faithfully written down

The other woman was really a girl, and Aubrey Vair met her first at a tennis party at Redhill Aubrey Vair did not play tennis after the accident to Miss Morton's eye and because latterly it made him pant and get warmer and moister than even a poet should be and this young lady had only recently arrived in England and could not play So they gravitated into the two vacant basket chairs beside Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt, in front of the hollyhocks, and were presently talking at their ease together

The other woman's name was unpropitious—Miss Smith—but you would never have suspected it from her face and costume Her parentage was promising she was an orphan her mother was a Hindoo and her father an Indian civil servant and Aubrey Vair—himself a happy mixture of Kelt and Teuton as indeed all literary men have to be nowadays—naturally believed in the literary consequences of a mixture of races She was dressed in white She had finely moulded pale features great depth of expression, and a cloud of delicately *frizz* black hair over her dark eyes and she looked at Aubrey Vair with a look half curious and half shy, that contrasted admirably with the stereotyped frankness of your common Reigate girl

"This is a splendid lawn—the best in Redhill" said Aubrey Vair in the course of the conversation "and I like it all the better because the daisies are spared" He indicated the daisies with a graceful sweep of his rather elegant hand

"They are sweet little flowers" said the lady in white, "and I have always associated them with England chiefly, perhaps, through a picture I saw '*over there*' when I was very little, of children making daisy

chains I promised myself that pleasure when I came home But, alas! I feel now rather too large for such delights"

"I do not see why we should not be able to enjoy these simple pleasures as we grow older—why our growth should have in it so much forgetting For my own part"—

"Has your wife got Jane's recipe for stuffing trout?" asked Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt abruptly

"I really don't know," said Aubrey Vair

"That's all right," said Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt "It ought to please even you"

"Anything will please me," said Aubrey Vair, "I care very little"—

"Oh, it's a lovely dish" said Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt, and relapsed into contemplation

"I was saying" said Aubrey Vair, "that I think I still find my keenest pleasures in childish pastimes I *have a little nephew that I see a great deal of and when* we fly kites together I am sure it would be hard to tell which of us is the happier By the bye, you should get at your daisy chains in that way Beguile some little girl"

"But I *did* I took that Morton mite for a walk in the meadows and timidly broached the subject And she reproached me for suggesting 'frivolous pursuits' It was a horrible disappointment"

"The governess here," said Aubrey Vair, "is robbing that child of its youth in a terrible way What will a life be that has no childhood at the beginning?"

"Some human beings are never young' he continued, "and they never grow up They lead absolutely colour less lives They are—they are etiolated They never love, and never feel the loss of it They are—for the moment I can think of no better image—*they are human* flower pots, in which no soul has been planted But a human soul properly growing must begin in a fresh childishness"

"Yes," said the dark lady thoughtfully, "a careless childhood, running wild almost That should be the beginning"

"Then we pass through the wonder and diffidence of youth"

"To strength and action," said the dark lady Her dreamy eyes were fixed on the Downs, and her fingers tightened on her knees as she spoke "Ah, it is a grand thing to live—as a man does—self reliant and free"

"And so at last," said Aubrey Vair, "come to the culmination and crown of life" He paused and glanced hastily at her Then he dropped his voice almost to a whisper—"And the culmination of life is love"

Their eyes met for a moment but she looked away at once Aubrey Vair felt a peculiar thrill and a catching in his breath but his emotions were too complex for analysis He had a certain sense of surprise, also, at the way his conversation had developed

Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt suddenly dug him in the chest with her ear trumpet, and someone at tennis bawled, "Love all!"

"Did I tell you Jane's girls have had scarlet fever?" asked Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt

"No," said Aubrey Vair

"Yes and they are peeling now," said Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt shutting her lips tightly and nodding in a slow significant manner at both of them

There was a pause All three seemed lost in thought, too deep for words

"Love" began Aubrey Vair presently, in a severely philosophical tone, leaning back in his chair, holding his hands like a praying saint's in front of him, and staring at the toe of his shoe,—"love is I believe, the one true and real thing in life It rises above reason interest, or explanation Yet I never read of an age when it was so much forgotten as it is now Never was love expected to run so much in appointed channels, never was it so despised checked, ordered, and obstructed Policemen

say, "This way, Fros!" As a result, we relieve our emotional possibilities in the hunt for gold and notoriety And after all, with the best fortune in these, we only hold up the gilded images of our success, and are weary slaves, with unsatisfied hearts, in the pageant of life"

Aubrey Vair sighed, and there was a pause The girl looked at him out of the mysterious darkness of her eyes She had read many books, but Aubrey Vair was her first literary man, and she took this kind of thing for genius —as girls have done before

"We are," continued Aubrey Vair, conscious of a favourable impression,—"we are like fireworks, mere dead, inert things until the appointed spark comes and then—if it is not damp—the dormant soul blazes forth in all its warmth and beauty That is living I sometimes think, do you know, that we should be happier if we could die soon after that golden time, like the Ephemerides There is a decay sets in"

"Figh?" said Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt startlingly "I didn't hear you"

"I was on the point of remarking," shouted Aubrey Vair, wheeling the array of his thoughts,—"I was on the point of remarking that few people in Redhill could match Mrs Morton's fine broad green"

'Others have noticed it,' Mrs Bayne's deaf aunt shouted back "It is since she has had in her new false teeth"

This interruption dislocated the conversation a little However—

"I must thank you, Mr Vair," said the dark girl, when they parted that afternoon, "for having given me very much to think about"

And from her manner, Aubrey Vair perceived clearly he had not wasted his time

It would require a subtler pen than mine to tell how from that day a passion for Miss Smith grew like Jonah's

gourd in the heart of Aubrey Vair He became pensive, and in the prolonged absence of Miss Smith, irritable Mrs Aubrey Vair felt the change in him, and put it down to a vitriolic Saturday Reviewer Indisputably the *Saturday* does at times go a little far He re read *Elective Affinities* and lent it to Miss Smith Incredible as it may appear to members of the Areopagus Club, where we know Aubrey Vair, he did also beyond all question inspire a sort of passion in that sombre eyed, rather clever, and really very beautiful girl

He talked to her a lot about love and destiny, and all that bric à brac of the minor poet And they talked together about his genius He elaborately, though discreetly, sought her society, and presented and read to her the milder of his unpublished sonnets We consider his Byronic features pasty, but the feminine mind has its own laws I suppose, also where a girl is not a fool a literary man has an enormous advantage over anyone but a preacher, in the show he can make of his heart's wares

At last a day in that summer came when he met her alone, possibly by chance in a quiet lane towards Horley There were ample hedges on either side, rich with honeysuckle, vetch, and mullein

They conversed intimately of his poetic ambitions, and then he read her those verses of his subsequently published in *Hobson's Magazine* "Tenderly ever, since I have met thee" He had written these the day before, and though I think the sentiment is uncommonly trite, there is a redeeming note of sincerity about the lines not conspicuous in all Aubrey Vair's poetry

He read rather well, and a swell of genuine emotion crept into his voice as he read, with one white hand thrown out to point the rhythm of the lines "Ever, my sweet, for thee," he concluded, looking up into her face

Before he looked up, he had been thinking chiefly of his poem and its effect Straightway he forgot it *Her*

arms hing limply before her, and her hands were clasped together Her eyes were very tender

"Your verses go to the heart," she said softly

Her mobile features were capable of wonderful shades of expression He suddenly forgot his wife and his position as a minor poet as he looked at her It is possible that his classical features may themselves have undergone a certain transfiguration For one brief moment—and it was always to linger in his memory—destiny lifted him out of his vain little self to a nobler level of simplicity The copy of "Tenderly ever" fluttered from his hand Considerations vanished Only one thing seemed of importance

"I love you,' he said abruptly

An expression of fear came into her eyes The grip of her hands upon one another tightened convulsively She became very pale

Then she moved her lips as if to speak, bringing her face slightly nearer to his There was nothing in the world at that moment for either of them but one another They were both trembling exceedingly In a whisper she said, "*You love me?*'

Aubrey Vair stood quivering and speechless, looking into her eyes He had never seen such a light as he saw there before He was in a wild tumult of emotion He was dreadfully scared at what he had done He could not say another word He nodded

"And this has come to me?" she said presently, in the same awe stricken whisper, and then, "Oh, my love, my love!"

And thereupon Aubrey Vair had her clasped to him self, her cheek upon his shoulder and his lips to hers

Thus it was that Aubrey Vair came by the cardinal memory of his life To this day it recurs in his works

A little boy clambering in the hedge some way down the lane saw this group with surprise, and then with scorn and contempt Recking nothing of his destiny, he

turned away, feeling that he at least could never come to the unspeakable unmanliness of hugging girls Unhappily for Reigate scandal, his shame for his sex was altogether too deep for words

An hour after, Aubrey Vair returned home in a hushed mood There were muffins after his own heart for his tea—Mrs Aubrey Vair had had hers And there were chrysanthemums, chiefly white ones,—flowers he loved,—set out in the china bowl he was wont to praise And his wife came behind him to kiss him as he sat eating

"De lill Jummuns," she remarked, kissing him under the ear

Then it came into the mind of Aubrey Vair with startling clearness, while his ear was being kissed, and with his mouth full of muffin, that life is a singularly complex thing

The summer passed at last into the harvest time, and the leaves began falling It was evening, the warm sunset light still touched the Downs, but up the valley a blue haze was creeping One or two lamps in Reigate were already alight

About half way up the slanting road that scales the Downs, there is a wooden seat where one may obtain a fine view of the red villas scattered below, and of the succession of blue hills beyond Here the girl with the shadowy face was sitting

She had a book on her knees, but it lay neglected She was leaning forward, her chin resting upon her hand She was looking across the valley into the darkening sky, with troubled eyes

Aubrey Vair appeared through the hazel bushes, and sat down beside her He held half a dozen dead leaves in his hand

She did not alter her attitude "Well?" she said

"Is it to be flight?" he asked

Aubrey Vair was rather pale. He had been having bad nights latterly, with dreams of the Continental Express, Mrs Aubrey Vair possibly even in pursuit,—he always fancied her making the tragedy ridiculous by tearfully bringing additional pairs of socks and any such trifles he had forgotten, with her —all Reigate and Redhill in commotion. He had never eloped before, and he had visions of difficulties with hotel proprietors. Mrs Aubrey Vair might telegraph ahead. Even he had had a prophetic vision of a headline in a halfpenny evening newspaper: "Young Lady abducts a Minor Poet." So there was a quaver in his voice as he asked, "Is it to be flight?"

"As you will," she answered, still not looking at him.

"I want you to consider particularly how this will affect you. A man," said Aubrey Vair slowly, and staring hard at the leaves in his hand, "even gains a certain éclat in these affairs. But to a woman it is ruin—social, moral."

"This is not love," said the girl in white.

"Ah, my dearest! Think of yourself."

"Stupid!" she said, under her breath.

"You spoke?"

"Nothing."

"But cannot we go on meeting one another, loving one another, without any great scandal or misery? Could we not"—

"That," interrupted Miss Smith, "would be unspeakably horrible."

"This is a dreadful conversation to me. Life is so intricate, such a web of subtle strands binds us this way and that. I cannot tell what is right. You must consider"—

"A man would break such strands."

"There is no manliness," said Aubrey Vair, with a sudden glow of moral exaltation, "in doing wrong. My love"—

"We could at least die together, dearest," she said

"Good Lord!" said Aubrey Vair "I mean—consider my wife"

"You have not considered her hitherto"

"There is a flavour—of cowardice, of desertion, about suicide," said Aubrey Vair "Frankly, I have the English prejudice, and do not like any kind of running away"

Miss Smith smiled very faintly "I see clearly now what I did not see My love and yours are very different things"

"Possibly it is a sexual difference," said Aubrey Vair, and then, feeling the remark inadequate, he relapsed into silence

They sat for some time without a word The two lights in Reigate below multiplied to a score of bright points, and, above, one star had become visible She began laughing an almost noiseless hysterical laugh that jarred unaccountably upon Aubrey Vair

Presently she stood up "They will wonder where I am," she said "I think I must be going"

He followed her to the road "Then this is the end?" he said, with a curious mixture of relief and poignant regret

"Yes, this is the end," she answered, and turned away

There straightway dropped into the soul of Aubrey Vair a sense of infinite loss It was an altogether new sensation She was perhaps twenty yards away, when he groaned aloud with the weight of it, and suddenly began running after her with his arms extended

"Annie," he cried,—"Annie! I have been talking *rot* Annie, now I know I love you! I cannot spare you This must not be I did not understand"

The weight was horrible

"Oh, stop, Annie!" he cried, with a breaking voice, and there were tears on his face

She turned upon him suddenly, and his arms fell by

his s de His express on changed at the s ght of her pale face

You do not understand she said I have said good bye.

S e looked at h m he vas ev dently grea y d s essed a little out of breath and he had j s s opped bl bber ing H s contempt ble q al ty reached the pa he c. She came up close to him and tak ng h s damp lly on e

nd aga n

and

ugh or

n her

hurried

away aga n and went ou of he path that Aubrey Va r must purs e at the cross oads

Aubrey Va r stood where she had k ssed h m w th a mind as nact ve as h s body un l her wh e dre s had d *sappeared Then he gave an ex ol n ary s gh a la ge* exha st ve exp a on and so awoke h m elf and began walk ng pens vely d agg ng h s feet through the dead leaves home Emot ons are terr ble th ngs

Do you l ke the potatoes dear? asked Mrs Aubrey Va r at d nner I cooked them myself

Aub ey Va r descended slowly from cloudy im palpable me l tat ons to the level of fr ed potatoes These po atoes —he remarked af er a pause d r ng wh ch he was str ggl ng w h recollect on Yes These pota oes have exactly the t nts of the dead leaves of the hazel

What a fanc ful poet it s sa d Mrs Aubrey Vair Taste them They are very n ce potatoes indeed

STORY THE FOURTEENTH

A Catastrophe

THE little shop was not paying The realisation came insensibly Winslow was not the man for definite addition and subtraction and sudden discovery He became aware of the truth in his mind gradually, as though it had always been there A lot of facts had converged and led him there There was that line of cretonnes—four half pieces—untouched, save for half a yard sold to cover a stool There were those shirtings at 4¾d —Bandersnatch, in the Broadway, was selling them at 2¾d —under cost, in fact (Surely Bandersnatch might let a man live!) Those servants' caps, a selling line, needed replenishing and that brought back the memory of Winslow's sole wholesale dealers Helter, Skelter, & Grab Why! how about their account?

Winslow stood with a big green box open on the counter before him when he thought of it His pale grey eyes grew a little rounder his pale, straggling moustache twitched He had been drifting along day after day He went round to the ramshackle cash desk in the corner—it was Winslow's weakness to sell his goods over the counter, give his customers a duplicate

bill, and then dodge into the desk to receive the money, as though he doubted his own honesty His lank forefinger, with the prominent joints, ran down the bright little calendar ("Clack's Cottons last for All Time") "One—two—three; three weeks an' a day!" said Winslow, staring "March! Only three weeks and a day It *can't* be"

"Tea, dear," said Mrs Winslow, opening the door with the glass window and the white blind that communicated with the parlour

"One minute," said Winslow, and began unlocking the desk

An irritable old gentleman, very hot and red about the face, and in a heavy fur lined coat, came in noisily. Mrs Winslow vanished

"Ugh!" said the old gentleman "Pocket handkerchief"

"Yes, sir," said Winslow "About what price"—

"Ugh!" said the old gentleman "Poggit handkerchief, quig!"

Winslow *began to feel* flustered He produced two boxes

"These sir"—began Winslow

"Sheed tin!" said the old gentleman, clutching the stiffness of the linen "Wad to blow my nose—not haggit about"

"*A cotton one, p'raps, sir?*" *said Winslow*

"How much?" said the old gentleman over the handkerchief

"Sevenpence, sir There's nothing more I can show you? No ties, braces—?"

"Damn!" said the old gentleman, fumbling in his ticket pocket, *and finally producing half a crown* Winslow looked round for his metallic duplicate book which he kept in various fixtures, according to circumstances, and then he caught the old gentleman's eye. He went straight to the desk at once and got the change, with an entire disregard of the routine of the shop

Winslow was always more or less excited by a customer But the open desk reminded him of his trouble It did not come back to him all at once He heard a finger nail softly tapping on the glass, and, looking up, saw Minnie's eyes over the blind It seemed like retreat opening He shut and locked the desk, and went into the back room to tea

But he was preoccupied Three weeks and a day! He took unusually large bites of his bread and butter, and stared hard at the little pot of jam He answered Minnie's conversational advances distractedly The shadow of Helter, Skelter, & Grab lay upon the tea table He was struggling with this new idea of failure, the tangible realisation that was taking shape and substance, condensing, as it were, out of the misty uneasiness of many days At present it was simply one concrete fact, there were thirty nine pounds left in the bank, and that day three weeks Messrs Helter, Skelter, & Grab, those enterprising outfitters of young men, would demand their eighty pounds

After tea there was a customer or so—small purchases some muslin and buckram, dress protectors tape, and a pair of Lisle hose Then, knowing that Black Care was lurking in the dusky corners of the shop, he lit the three lamps early and set to, refolding his cotton prints, the most vigorous and least meditative proceeding of which he could think He could see Minnie's shadow in the other room as she moved about the table She was busy turning an old dress He had a walk after supper, looked in at the Y M C A, but found no one to talk to, and finally went to bed Minnie was already there And there, too, waiting for him nudging him gently, until about midnight he was hopelessly awake, sat Black Care

He had had one or two nights lately in that company, but this was much worse First came Messrs Helter, Skelter, & Grab, and their demand for eighty pounds—an enormous sum when your original capital was only a

hundred and seventy. They camped, as it were, before him, sat down and beleaguered him. He clutched feebly at the circumambient darkness for expedients. Suppose he had a sale, sold things for almost anything? He tried to imagine a sale miraculously successful in some unexpected manner, and mildly profitable in spite of reductions below cost. Then Bandersnatch Limited, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, Broadway, joined the siege, a long caterpillar of frontage, a battery of shop fronts, wherein things were sold at a farthing above cost. How could he fight such an establishment? Besides, what had he to sell? He began to review his resources. What taking line was there to bait the sale? Then straightway came those pieces of cretonne, yellow and black, with a bluish green flower, those discredited skirtings, prints without buoyancy, sarn shing haberdashery, some despairful four button gloves by an inferior maker —a hopeless crew. And that was his force against Bandersnatch, Helter, Skelter, & Grab, and the pitiless world behind them. Whatever had made him think a mortal would buy such things? Why had he bought this and neglected that? He suddenly realised the intensity of his hatred for Helter, Skelter, & Grab's salesman. Then he drove towards an agony of self-reproach. He had spent too much on that cash desk. What real need was there of a desk? He saw his vanity of that desk in a lurid glow of self discovery. And the lamps? Five pounds! Then suddenly, with what was almost physical pain, he remembered the rent.

He groaned and turned over. And there, dim in the darkness, was the hummock of Mrs Winslow's shoulder. That set him off in another direction. He became acutely sensible of Minnie's want of feeling. Here he was, worried to death about business, and she sleeping like a little child. He regretted having married, with that infinite bitterness that only comes to the human heart in the small hours of the morning. That hummock of white seemed absolutely without helpful-

ness, a burden, a responsibility What fools men were to marry! Minnie's inert repose irritated him so much that he was almost provoked to wake her up and tell her that they were "Ruined" She would have to go back to her uncle her uncle had always been against him and as for his own future, Winslow was exceedingly uncertain A shop assistant who has once set up for himself finds the utmost difficulty in getting into a situation again He began to figure himself "crib hunting" once more, going from this wholesale house to that, writing innumerable letters How he hated writing letters! "Sir,—Referring to your advertisement in the *Christian World*" He beheld an infinite vista of discomfort and disappointment, ending—in a gulf

He dressed, yawning, and went down to open the shop He felt tired before the day began As he carried the shutters in, he kept asking himself what good he was doing The end was inevitable, whether he bothered or not The clear daylight smote into the place, and showed how old and rough and splintered was the floor, how shabby the second hand counter, how hopeless the whole enterprise He had been dreaming these past six months of a bright shop, of a happy couple, of a modest but comely profit flowing in He had suddenly awakened from his dream The braid that bound his decent black coat—it was a trifle loose—caught against the catch of the shop door, and was torn away This suddenly turned his wretchedness to wrath He stood quivering for a moment, then, with a spiteful clutch, tore the braid looser, and went in to Minnie

"Here," he said, with infinite reproach, "look here! You might look after a chap a bit"

"I didn't see it was torn," said Minnie

"You never do," said Winslow, with gross injustice, "until things are too late"

Minnie looked suddenly at his face "I'll sew it now, Sid, if you like"

"Let's have breakfast first," said Winslow, "and do things at their proper time."

He was preoccupied at breakfast, and Minnie watched him anxiously. His only remark was to declare his egg a bad one. It wasn't; it was flavoury—being one of those at fifteen a shilling—but quite nice. He pushed it away from him, and then, having eaten a slice of bread and butter, admitted himself in the wrong by resuming the egg.

"Sid," said Minnie, as he stood up to go into the shop again, "you're not well."

"I'm *well* enough." He looked at her as though he hated her.

"Then there's something else the matter. You aren't angry with me, Sid, are you, about that bread? *Do* tell me what's the matter. You were just like this at tea yesterday, and at supper-time. It wasn't the bread then."

"And I'm likely to be."

She looked interrogation. "Oh, what *is* the matter?" she said.

It was too good a chance to miss, and he brought the evil news out with dramatic force. "Matter?" he said. "I done my best, and here we are. That's the matter! If I can't pay Helter, Skelter & Grabbe, eighty pounds, this day three weeks— Pause. We shall be sold up! Sold up! That's the matter, Min! SOLD UP!"

"Oh, Sid," began Minnie.

He slammed the door. For the moment he felt relieved of at least half his misery. He began dusting boxes that did not require dusting, and then reblocked a cretonne already faultlessly blocked. He was in a state of grim wretchedness, a martyr under the harrow of fate. At anyrate it should not be said he failed for want of industry. And how he had planned and contrived and worked! All to this end! He felt horrible doubts. Providence and Bandersnatch—surely

they were incompatible! Perhaps he was being "tried"? That sent him off upon a new tack, a very comforting one. The martyr pose, the gold in the furnace attitude, lasted all the morning.

At dinner—"potato pie"—he looked up suddenly, and saw Minnie's face regarding him. Pale she looked, and a little red about the eyes. Something caught him suddenly with a queer effect upon his throat. All his thoughts seemed to wheel round into quite a new direction.

He pushed back his plate and stared at her blankly. Then he got up, went round the table to her—she staring at him. He dropped on his knees beside her without a word. "Oh, Minnie!" he said, and suddenly she knew it was peace, and put her arms about him, as he began to sob and weep.

He cried like a little boy, slobbering on her shoulder that he was a knave to have married her and brought her to this, that he hadn't the wits to be trusted with a penny, that it was all his fault, that he "*had* hoped *so*"—ending in a howl. And she, crying gently herself, patting his shoulders, said "*Ssh!*" softly to his noisy weeping, and so soothed the outbreak. Then suddenly the crazy bell upon the shop door began, and Winslow had to jump to his feet, and be a man again.

After that scene they "talked it over" at tea, at supper, in bed, at every possible interval in between, solemnly—quite inconclusively—with set faces and eyes for the most part staring in front of them—and yet with a certain mutual comfort. "What to do I don't know," was Winslow's main proposition. Minnie tried to take a cheerful view of service—with a probable baby. But she found she needed all her courage. And her uncle would help her again, perhaps, just at the critical time. It didn't do for folks to be too proud. Besides, "something might happen," a favourite formula with her.

One hopeful line was to anticipate a sudden afflux of customers "Perhaps," said Minnie "you might get together fifty They know you well enough to trust you a bit" They debated that point Once the possibility of Helter, Skelter, & Grab giving credit was admitted, it was pleasant to begin sweating the acceptable minimum For some half hour over tea the second day after Winslow's discoveries they were quite cheerful again, laughing even at their terrific fears Even twenty pounds to go on with might be considered enough Then in some mysterious way the pleasant prospect of Messrs Helter, Skelter, & Grab tempering *the wind to the shorn retailer vanished*—vanished absolutely, and Winslow found himself again in the pit of despair

He began looking about at the furniture and wondering idly what it would fetch The chiffonier *was good, anyhow, and there were Minnie's old plates* that her mother used to have Then he began to think of desperate expedients for putting off the evil day He had heard somewhere of Bills of Sale—there was to his ears something comfortingly substantial in the phrase Then, why not "Go to the Money Lenders"?

One cheering thing happened on Thursday afternoon a little girl came in with a pattern of "print," and he was able to match it He had not been able to match anything out of his meagre stock before He went in and told Minnie The incident is mentioned lest the reader should imagine it was uniform despair with him

The next morning, and the next, after the discovery, Winslow opened shop late When one has been awake *most of the night, and has no hope, what is the good* of getting up punctually? But as he went into the dark shop on Friday he saw something lying on the floor, something lit by the bright light that came under the ill fitting door—a black oblong He stooped and

picked up an envelope with a deep mourning edge It was addressed to his wife Clearly a death in her family—perhaps her uncle He knew the man too well to *have expectations And they would have* to get mourning and go to the funeral The brutal cruelty of people dying! He saw it all in a flash—he always visualised his thoughts Black trousers to get, black crape, black gloves—none in stock—the railway fares, the shop closed for the day

"I'm afraid there's bad news, Minnie," he said

She was kneeling before the fireplace, blowing the fire She had her housemaid's gloves on and the old country sun bonnet she wore of a morning, to keep the dust out of her hair She turned, saw the envelope gave a gasp, and pressed two bloodless lips together

"I'm afraid it's uncle," she said, holding the letter and staring with eyes wide open into Winslow's face "*It's a strange hand!*"

"The postmark's Hull," said Winslow

"The postmark's Hull"

Minnie opened the letter slowly, drew it out, hesitated, turned it over, saw the signature "It's Mr Speight!"

"What does he say?" said Winslow.

Minnie began to read "*Oh!*" she screamed She dropped the letter, collapsed into a crouching heap, her hands covering her eyes Winslow snatched at it "A most terrible accident has occurred," he read, "Melchior's chimney fell down yesterday evening right on the top of your uncle's house, and every living soul was killed—your uncle, your cousin Mary, Will and Ned, and the girl—every one of them, and smashed—you would hardly know them I'm writing to you to break the news before you see it in the papers"— The letter fluttered from Winslow's fingers He put out his hand against the mantel to steady himself

All of them dead! Then he saw, as in a vision, *a row of seven cottages, each let at seven shillings*

a week, a timber yard, two villas, and the ruins—still marketable—of the avuncular residence. He tried to feel a sense of loss, and could not. They were sure to have been left to Minnie's aunt. All dead! $7 \times 7 \times 52 - 20$ began insensibly to work itself out in his mind, but discipline was ever weak in his mental arithmetic; figures kept moving from one line to another like children playing at Widdy Widdy Way. Was it two hundred pounds about—or one hundred pounds? Presently he picked up the letter again and finished reading it. "You being the next of kin," said Mr. Speight.

"How *awful!*" said Minnie, in a horror-struck whisper, and looking up at last. Winslow stared back at her, shaking his head solemnly. There were a thousand things running through his mind, but none that even to his dull sense seemed appropriate as a remark. "It was the Lord's will," he said at last.

"It seems so very, very terrible," said Minnie. "Poor auntie—dear auntie—Ted—poor, dear uncle——"

"It was the Lord's will, Minnie," said Winslow, with infinite feeling. A long silence.

"Yes," said Minnie, very slowly, staring thoughtfully at the crackling black paper in the grate. The fire had gone out. "Yes, perhaps it was the Lord's will."

They looked gravely at one another. Each would have been terribly shocked at any mention of the property by the other. She turned to the dark fireplace and began tearing up an old newspaper slowly. "Whatever our losses may be, the world's work still waits for us." Winslow gave a deep sigh and walked in a humbled manner towards the front door. As he opened it, a flood of sunlight came streaming into the dark shadows of the closed shop. Bandersnatch, Helter Skelter & Coral had vanished out of his mind like the mists before the rising sun.

Presently he was carrying in the shutters, and in the brisk way the fire in the kitchen was crackling

exhilaratingly, with a little saucepan walloping above it, for Minnie was boiling two eggs,—one for herself this morning, as well as one for him—and Minnie herself was audible, laying breakfast with the greatest *eclat* The blow was a sudden and terrible one—but it behoves us to face such things bravely in this sad, unaccountable world It was quite midday before either of them mentioned the cottages.



STORY THE FIFTEENTH

The Lost Inheritance

"MY uncle," said the man with the glass eye, "was what you might call a hemi semi demi millionaire He was worth about a hundred and twenty thousand Quite And he left me all his money"

I glanced at the shiny sleeve of his coat, and my eye travelled up to the frayed collar

"Every penny," said the man with the glass eye, and I caught the active pupil looking at me with a touch of offence

"I've never had any windfalls like that," I said, trying to speak enviously and propitiate him

"Even a legacy isn't always a blessing," he remarked with a sigh, and with an air of philosophical resignation he put the red nose and the wiry moustache into his tankard for a space

"Perhaps not," I said

"He was an author, you see, and he wrote a lot of books"

"Indeed!"

"That was the trouble of it all" He stared at me with the available eye to see if I grasped his state-

ment, then averted his face a little and produced a toothpick

"You see," he said, smacking his lips after a pause, "it was like this He was my uncle—my maternal uncle And he had—what shall I call it?—a weakness for writing edifying literature Weakness is hardly the word—downright mania is nearer the mark He'd been librarian in a Polytechnic, and as soon as the money came to him he began to indulge his ambition It's a simply extraordinary and incomprehensible thing to me Here was a man of thirty seven suddenly dropped into a perfect pile of gold, and he didn't go—not a day's bust on it One would think a chap would go and get himself dressed a bit decent—say a couple of dozen pairs of trousers at a West End tailor's, but he never did You d hardly believe it, but when he died he hadn't even a gold watch It seems wrong for people like that to have money All he did was just to take a house, and order in pretty nearly five tons of books and ink and paper, and set to writing edifying literature as hard as ever he could write I *can't* understand it! But he did The money came to him, curiously enough, through a maternal uncle of *his*, unexpected like when he was seven and thirty *My* mother, it happened was his only relation in the wide, wide world except some second cousins of his And I was her only son You follow all that? The second cousins had one only son too, but they brought him to see the old man too soon He was rather a spoilt youngster, was this son of theirs and directly he set eyes on my uncle, he began bawling out as hard as he could 'Take 'im away—er,' he says 'take 'im away' and so did for himself entirely It was pretty straight sailing, you d think, for me, eh? And my mother, being a sensible, careful woman, settled the business in her own mind long before he did

"He was a curious little chap, was my uncle, as I remember him I don't wonder at the kid being scared

Hair, just like these Japanese dolls they sell, black and straight and stiff all round the brim and none in the middle, and below, a whitish kind of face and rather large dark grey eyes moving about behind his spectacles. He used to attach a great deal of importance to dress and always wore a flapping overcoat and a big brimmed felt hat of a most extraordinary size. He looked a rummy little beggar, I can tell you. Indoors it was, as a rule, a dirty red flannel dressing gown and a black skull cap he had. That black skull cap made him look like the portraits of all kinds of celebrated people. He was always moving about from house to house, was my uncle, with his chair which had belonged to Savage Landor, and his two writing tables, one of Carlyle's and the other of Shelley's, so the dealer told him, and the completest portable reference library in England, he said he had—and he lugged the whole caravan, now to a house at Down, near Darwin's old place, then to Reigate, near Meredith, then off to Haslemere, then back to Chelsea for a bit, and then up to Hampstead. He knew there was something wrong with his stuff, but he never knew there was anything wrong with his brains. It was always the air, or the water, or the altitude, or some tommy rot like that. '*So much depends on environment*,' *he used to say, and* stare at you hard, as if he half suspected you were hiding a grin at him somewhere under your face. 'So much depends on environment to a sensitive mind like mine.'

"What was his name? You wouldn't know it if I told you. He wrote nothing that anyone has ever read—nothing. No one *could* read it. He wanted to be a great teacher, he said, and he didn't know what he wanted to teach any more than a child. So he just blethered at large about Truth and Righteousness, and the Spirit of History, and all that. Book after book he wrote and published at his own expense. He wasn't quite right in his head, you know, really, and to hear

him go on at the critics—not because they slated him, mind you—he liked that—but because they didn't take any notice of him at all 'What do the nations want?' he would ask holding out his brown old claw 'Why, teaching—guidance! They are scattered upon the hills like sheep without a shepherd There is War and Rumours of War, the unlaid Spirit of Discord abroad in the land, Nihilism, Vivisection, Vaccination, Drunkenness Penury, Want, Socialistic Error, Selfish Capital! Do you see the clouds, Ted?'—My name, you know—'Do you see the clouds lowering over the land? and behind it all—the Mongol waits!' He was always very great on Mongols, and the Spectre of Socialism, and such like things

'Then out would come his finger at me, and with his eyes all afire and his skull cap askew, he would whisper 'And here am I What do I want? Nations to teach Nations! I say it with all modesty, Ted I *could* I would guide them, nay! but I *will* guide them to a safe haven, to the land of Righteousness, flowing with milk and honey'

"That's how he used to go on Ramble, rave about the nations, and righteousness, and that kind of thing Kind of mincemeat of Bible and blethers From fourteen up to three and twenty, when I might have been improving my mind, my mother used to wash me and brush my hair (at least in the earlier years of it), with a nice parting down the middle, and take me once or twice a week, to hear this old lunatic jabber about things he had read of in the morning papers trying to do it as much like Carlyle as he could, and I used to sit according to instructions, and look intelligent and nice, and pretend to be taking it all in Afterwards I used to go of my own free will, out of a regard for the legacy I was the only person that used to go and see him He wrote, I believe, to every man who made the slightest stir in the world, sending him a copy or so of his books, and inviting him to come and talk

about the nations to him, but half of them didn't answer, and none ever came And when the girl let you in—she was an artful bit of goods, that girl—there were heaps of letters on the hall seat waiting to go off, addressed to Prince Bismarck, the President of the United States, and such like people And one went up the staircase and along the cobwebby passage—the house keeper drank like fury, and his passages were always cobwebby,—and found him at last, with books turned down all over the room, and heaps of torn paper on the floor, and telegrams and newspapers littered about, and empty coffee-cups and half eaten bits of toast on the desk and the mantel You'd see his back humped up, and his hair would be sticking out quite straight between the collar of that dressing gown thing and the edge of the skull cap

"'A moment!' he would say 'A moment!' over his shoulder 'The *mot juste* you know Ted *le mot juste* Righteous thought righteously expressed—Aah!—concatenation And now, Ted,' he'd say spinning round in his study chair, 'how's Young England?' That was his silly name for me

"Well, that was my uncle, and that was how he talked—to me, at any rate With others about he seemed a bit shy And he not only talked to me, but he gave me his books, books of six hundred pages or so, with cock-eyed headings 'The Shrieking Sisterhood' 'The Behemoth of Bigotry,' 'Crucibles and Cullenders,' and so on All very strong, and none of them original The very last time but one that I saw him he gave me a book He was feeling ill even then, and his hand shook and he was despondent I noticed it because I was naturally on the look-out for those little symptoms 'My last book, Ted,' he said 'My last book, my boy, my last word to the deaf and hardened nations,' and I'm hanged if a tear didn't go rolling down his yellow old cheek He was regular crying because it was so nearly over, and he hadn't only written about fifty

three books of rubbish 'I've sometimes thought, Ted'—he said, and stopped

"'Perhaps I've been a bit hasty and angry with this stiff necked generation A little more sweetness, perhaps, and a little less blinding light I've sometimes thought—I might have swayed them But I've done my best, Ted'

'And then, with a burst, for the first and last time in his life he owned himself a failure It showed he was really ill He seemed to think for a minute, and then he spoke quietly and low, as sane and sober as I am now I've been a fool, Ted,' he said 'I've been flapping nonsense all my life Only He who readeth the heart knows whether this is anything more than vanity Ted I don't But He knows He knows, and if I have done foolishly and vainly, in my heart—in my heart'—

'Just like that he spoke repeating himself, and he stopped quite short and handed the book to me trembling Then the old shine came back into his eye I remember it all fairly well, because I repeated it and acted it to my old mother when I got home, to cheer her up a bit 'Take this book and read it' he said It's my last word my very last word I've left all my property to you Ted, and may you use it better than I have done' And then he fell a-coughing

"I remember that quite well even now, and how I went home cock a hoop and how he was in bed the next time I called The housekeeper was downstairs drunk and I fooled about—as a young man will—with the girl in the passage before I went to him He was sinking fast But even then his vanity clung to him

"'Have you read it?' he whispered

"'Sat up all night reading it,' I said in his ear to cheer him 'It's the last,' said I, and then with a memory of some poetry or other in my head, 'but it's the bravest and best'

"He smiled a little and tried to squeeze my hand as a woman might do, and left off squeezing in the middle

and lay still 'The bravest and the best' sa d I again, seeing it pleased him But he d dn t ans er I heard the girl giggle outside the door, for o cas ona ly we d had just a bit of innocent laughter you kn w at his ways I looked at his face and his eyes were closed, and it was just as if somebody had punched in his nose on either side But he was still sn ling It s queer to think of—he lay dead, lay dead there, an utter failure, with the smile of success on his face

"That was the end of my uncle You can imagine me and my mother saw that he had a de ent funeral Then, of course came the hunt f r the w ll We began decent and respectful at first and before the day was out we were ripping chairs and smash ng b reau panels, and sounding walls Every hour we expected those others to come in We asked the housekeeper and found she'd actually witnessed a will—on an ordinary half sheet of notepaper it was written and very short, she said—not a month ago The other witness was the gardener, and he bore her out word for word But I m hanged if there was that or any o her w ll to be found The way my mother talked must have made him turn in his grave At last a lawyer at Re gate sprang one on us that had been made years ago d r ng some temporary quarrel with my mother I m blest if that wasn t the only will to be discovered anywhere and it left every penny he possessed to *that 'Take* im *away' youngster* of h s second cousin's—a chap who d never had to stand ' life"

. . .

. .

. . th the glass eye

"*I* had to wait for the end of the story till this very morning, and I was a blessed sight more interested than you are You just wait a bit too They executed the will, and the other chap inherited, and directly he was one and twenty he began to blew it How he did blew it, to be sure! He bet, he drank, he got in the papers

for this and that I tell you, it makes me wriggle to think of the times he had He blewed every ha penny of it before he was thirty, and the last I heard of him was—Holloway! Three years ago

"Well, I naturally fell on hard times, because, as you see, the only trade I knew was legacy cadging All my plans were waiting over to begin so to speak, when the old chap died I've had my ups and downs since then Just now it's a period of depression I tell you frankly, I'm [illegible] my room

[illegible]

one will buy them, not to wrap butter in, even—well, they annoyed me I'd promised him not to part with them, and I never kept a promise easier I let out at them with my boot, and sent them shooting across the room One lifted at the kick, and spun through the air And out of it flapped—You guess?

"It was the will He'd given it me himself in that very last volume of all"

He folded his arms on the table, and looked sadly with the active eye at his empty tankard He shook his head slowly, and said softly, "I'd never *opened* the book, much more cut a page!" Then he looked up, with a bitter laugh, for my sympathy "Fancy hiding it there! Eigh? Of all places"

He began to fish absently for a dead fly with his finger "It just shows you the vanity of authors" he said, looking up at me "It wasn't no trick of his He'd meant perfectly fair He'd really thought I was really going home to read that blessed book of his through But it shows you, don't it?"—his eye went down to the tankard again,—"It shows you, too, how we poor human beings fail to understand one another"

[illegible] thirst [illegible] *He* [illegible] [illegible]



STORY THE SIXTEENTH

The Sad Story of a Dramatic Critic

I WAS—you shall hear immediately why I am not now—Egbert Craddock Cummins The name remains I am still (Heaven help me!) Dramatic Critic to the *Fiery Cross* What I shall be in a little while I do not know I write in great trouble and confusion of mind I will do what I can to make myself clear in the face of terrible difficulties You must bear with me a little When a man is rapidly losing his own identity, he naturally finds a difficulty in expressing himself I will make it perfectly plain in a minute, when once I get my grip upon the story Let me see—where *am* I? I wish I knew Ah, I have it! Dead self! Egbert Craddock Cummins!

In the past I should have disliked writing anything quite so full of "I" as this story must be It is full of "I's" before and behind, like the beast in Revelation—the one with a head like a calf, I am afraid But my tastes have changed since I became a Dramatic Critic and studied the masters—G R S, G B S, G A S, and the others Everything has changed since then At least the story is about myself—so that there is some

excuse for me And it is really not egotism, because, as I say, since those days my identity has undergone an entire alteration

That past! I was—in those days—rather a nice fellow, rather shy—taste for grey in my clothes, weedy little moustache, face "interesting," slight stutter which I had caught in early life from a schoolfellow Engaged to a very nice girl named Delia Fairly new, she was—cigarettes liked me because I was human and original Considered I was like Lamb—on the strength of the stutter I believe Father, an eminent authority on postage stamps She read a great deal in the British Museum (A perfect pairing ground for literary people, that British Museum—you should read George Egerton and Justin Huntly M'Carthy and Gissing and the rest of them) We loved in our intellectual way, and shared the brightest hopes (All gone now) And her father liked me because I seemed honestly eager to hear about stamps She had no mother Indeed, I had the happiest prospects a young man could have I never went to theatres in those days My Aunt Charlotte before she died had told me not to

Then Barnaby, the editor of the *Fiery Cross*, made me—in spite of my spasmodic efforts to escape—Dramatic Critic He is a fine, healthy man, Barnaby, with an enormous head of frizzy black hair and a convincing manner, and he caught me on the staircase going to see Wembly He had been dining, and was more than usually buoyant "Hullo, Cummins!" he said "The very man I want!" He caught me by the shoulder or the collar or something, ran me up the little passage, and flung me over the waste paper basket into the arm chair in his office "Pray be seated," he said, as he did so Then he ran across the room and came back with some pink and yellow tickets and pushed them into my hand "Opera Comique" he said, "Thursday, Friday, the Surrey; Saturday, the Frivolity That's all, I think."

"But —I began

"Glad you're free," he said, snatching some proofs off the desk and beginning to read.

"I don't quite understand," I said.

"*Eigh?*" he said at the top of his voice, as though he thought I had gone, and was startled at my remark.

"Do you want me to criticise these plays?"

"Do something with 'em. Did you think it was a treat?"

"But I can't."

"Did you call me a fool?"

"Well, I've never been to a theatre in my life."

"Virgin soil."

"But I don't know anything about it, you know."

"That's just it. New view. No hack. No *clichés* in stock. Ours is a live paper, not a bag of tricks. None of your clockwork professional journalism in this office. And I can rely on your integrity —"

"But I've conscientious scruples —"

He caught me up suddenly and put me outside his door. "Go and talk to Wembly about that," he said. "He'll explain."

As I stood perplexed, he opened the door again, said, "I forgot this," thrust a fourth ticket into my hand (it was for that night—in twenty minutes' time), and slammed the door upon me. His expression was quite calm, but I caught his eye.

I hate arguments. I decided that I would take his hint and become (to my own destruction) a Dramatic Critic. I walked slowly down the passage to Wembly. That Barnaby has a remarkably persuasive way. He has made few suggestions during our very pleasant intercourse of four years that he has not ultimately won me round to adopting. It may be, of course, that I am of a yielding disposition; certainly I am too apt to take my colour from my circumstances. It is indeed to my unfortunate susceptibility to vivid impressions that all my misfortunes are due. I have already alluded to the slight

stammer I had acquired from a schoolfellow in my youth However, this is a digression I went home in a cab to dress

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I

how I got lost during the *entr'acte* in a lot of red plush passages, and saw the third act from the gallery The only point upon which I wish to lay stress was the remarkable effect of the acting upon me You must remember I had lived a quiet and retired life, and had never been to the theatre before, and that I am extremely sensitive to vivid impressions At the risk of repetition I must insist upon these points

The first effect was a profound amazement, not untinctured by alarm The phenomenal unnaturalness of acting is a thing discounted in the minds of most people by early visits to the theatre They get used to the fantastic gestures, the flamboyant emotions, the weird mouthings, melodious snortings, agonising yelps, lip gnawings, glaring horrors, and other emotional symbolism of the stage It becomes at last a mere deaf and dumb language to them, which they read intelligently

like fashionable Americans of the current epoch and I fell into the natural error of supposing that the actors were trying to represent human beings I looked round on my first night audience with a kind of wonder, discovered—as all new Dramatic Critics do—that it rested with me to reform the Drama, and, after a supper choked with emotion, went off to the office to write a

If my stuff

Barnaby

But I could not sleep that night I dreamt of actors —actors glaring actors smiting their chests, actors fling

ing out a handful of extended fingers actors smiling bitterly laughing despairingly falling hopelessly dying idiotically I got up at eleven with a sl ght headache, read my notice in the *Fiery Cross* breakfas ed and went back to my room to shave (It s my habit to do so) Then an odd thing happened I could not find my razor Suddenly it occurred to me that I had not un packed it the day before

Ah' said I, in front of the looking glass Then "Hullo'"

Quite involuntarily, when I had thought of my port manteau I had fl ng up the left arm (fingers fully extended) and clutched at my diaphragm with my right hand I am an acutely self conscious man at all times. The gesture struck me as absolutely novel for me I repeated it for my own satisfaction Odd' Then (rather puzzled) I turned to my portmanteau

After shaving my mind reverted to the acting I had seen and I entertained myself before the cheval glass with some imitations of Jafferay s more exaggerated gestures 'Really one might think it a d sease I said — *Stage Walker s'* (*There s many a tr h spoken in* jest) Then if I remember rightly I went off to see Wembly and afterwards lunched at the Brit sh Museum with Del a We actually spoke about our prospects in the l ght of my new appointment

Delia and stoop ng in an old fashioned courtly way over her hand D rectly I caught myself I stra ghtened myself up and became very uncomfortable I remember she looked at me curiously Then in the office I found myself do ng nervous business fingers on teeth when Barnaby asked me a question I could not very well answer Then in some trifling difference with Delia I

clasped my hand to my brow And I pranced through my social transactions at times singularly like an actor! I tried not to—no one could be more keenly alive to the arrant absurdity of the histrionic bearing And I did!

It began to dawn on me what it all meant The acting I saw, was too much for my delicately strung nervous system I have always, I know, been too amenable to the suggestions of my circumstances Night after night of concentrated attention to the conventional attitudes and intonation of the English stage was gradually affecting my speech and carriage I was giving way to the infection of sympathetic imitation Night after night my plastic nervous system took the print of some new amazing gesture, some new emotional exaggeration—and retained it A kind of theatrical veneer threatened to plate over and obliterate my private individuality altogether I saw myself in a kind of vision Sitting by myself one night my new self seemed to me to glide posing and gesticulating, across the room He clutched his throat he opened his fingers he opened his legs in walking like a high class marionette He went from attitude to attitude He might have been clockwork Directly after this I made an ineffectual attempt to resign my theatrical work But Barnaby persisted in talking about the Polywhiddle Divorce all the time I was with him, and I could get no opportunity of saying what I wished

And then Delia's manner began to change towards me The ease of our intercourse vanished I felt she was learning to dislike me I grinned, and capered, and scowled, and posed at her in a thousand ways, and knew—with what a voiceless agony!—that I did it all the time I tried to resign again, and Barnaby talked about "X" and "Z" and "Y" in the *New Review* and gave me a strong cigar to smoke, and so routed me And then I walked up the Assyrian Gallery in the manner of Irving to meet Delia, and so precipitated the crisis

"Ah!—*Dear!*" I said, with more sprightliness and emotion in my voice than had ever been in all my life before I became (to my own undoing) a Dramatic Critic.

She held out her hand rather coldly, scrutinising my face as she did so I prepared, with a new won grace, to walk by her side

"Egbert," she said, standing still, and thought Then she looked at me

I said nothing I felt what was coming I tried to be the old Egbert Craddock Cummins of shambling gait and stammering sincerity, whom she loved but I felt even as I did so that I was a new thing a thing of surging emotions and mysterious fixity—like no human being that ever lived, except upon the stage "Egbert," she said, "you are not yourself"

"Ah!" Involuntarily I clutched my diaphragm and averted my head (as is the way with them)

"*There!*" she said

"*What do you mean?*" I said, whispering in vocal italics—you know how they do it—turning on her, perplexity on face, right hand down, left on brow I knew quite well what she meant I knew quite well the dramatic unreality of my behaviour But I struggled against it in vain "What do you mean?" I said, and, in a kind of hoarse whisper "I don t understand!"

She really looked as though she disliked me "What do you keep on posing for?" she said "I don't like it You didn't use to"

"Didn't use to!" I said slowly, repeating this twice I glared up and down the gallery with short, sharp glances "We are alone," I said swiftly "*Listen!*" I poked my forefinger towards her, and glared at her "I am under a curse"

I saw her hand tighten upon her sunshade "You are under some bad influence or other," said Delia "You should give it up I never knew anyone change as you have done"

"Delia!" I said, lapsing into the pathetic "Pity me Augh! Delia! *Pit*—y me!"

She eyed me critically "*Why* you keep playing the fool like this I don't know," she said "Anyhow, I really cannot go about with a man who behaves as you do You made us both ridiculous on Wednesday Frankly, I dislike you, as you are now I met you here to tell you so—as it's about the only place where we can be sure of being alone together"—

"Delia!" said I, with intensity, knuckles of clenched hands white "You don't mean"—

"I do,' said Delia "A woman's lot is sad enough at the best of times But with you"—

I clapped my hand on my brow

"So, good bye,' said Delia, without emotion

"*Oh, Delia!*" I said "*Not this!*"

"Good bye, Mr Cummins," she said

By a violent effort I controlled myself and touched her hand I tried to say some word of explanation to her She looked into my working face and winced "I *must* do it," she said hopelessly Then she turned from me and began walking rapidly down the gallery

Heavens! How the human agony cried within me! I loved Delia But nothing found expression—I was already too deeply crusted with my acquired self

"Good baye!" I said at last, watching her retreating figure How I hated myself for doing it! After she had vanished, I repeated in a dreamy way, "Good baye!" looking hopelessly round me Then, with a kind of heart broken cry, I shook my clenched fists in the air, staggered to the pedestal of a winged figure, buried my face in my arms, and made my shoulders heave Some thing within me said "Ass!" as I did so (I had the greatest difficulty in persuading the Museum policeman, who was attracted by my cry of agony, that I was not intoxicated, but merely suffering from a transient indisposition.)

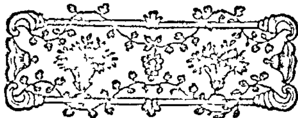
But even this great sorrow has not availed to save me from my fate I see it, everyone sees it I grow more "theatrical" every day And no one could be more *painfully aware of the pungent silliness of theatrical* ways The quiet, nervous, but pleasing E C Cummins vanishes I cannot save him I am driven like a dead leaf before the winds of March My tailor even enters into the spirit of my disorder He has a peculiar sense of what is fitting I tried to get a dull grey suit from him this spring, and he foisted a brilliant blue upon me, and I see he has put braid down the sides of my new dress trousers My hairdresser insists upon giving me a "wave"

I am beginning to associate with actors I detest them, but it is only in their company that I can feel I am not glaringly conspicuous Their talk infects me I notice a growing tendency to dramatic brevity, to dashes and pauses in my style, to a punctuation of bows and attitudes Barnaby has remarked it too I offended Wembly by calling him 'Dear Boy" yesterday I dread the end, but I cannot escape from it

The *fact is, I am being obliterated* Living a grey, retired life all my youth, I came to the theatre a delicate sketch of a man, a thing of tints and faint lines Their gorgeous colouring has effaced me altogether People forget how much mode of expression, method of movement, are a matter of contagion I have heard of stage struck people before, and thought it a figure of speech I spoke of it jestingly, as a disease It is no jest It *is* a disease And I have got it bad! Deep down within me I *protest against* the wrong done to my personality—unavailingly For three hours or more a week I have to go and concentrate my attention on some fresh play, and the suggestions of the drama strengthen their awful hold upon me My manners grow so flamboyant, my passions so professional, that I doubt, as I said at the outset, whether it is really myself that behaves in such a manner I feel merely the core to this dramatic casing

that grows thicker and presses upon me—me and mine I feel like King John's abbot in his cope of lead

I doubt, indeed, whether I should not abandon the struggle altogether—leave this sad world of ordinary life for which I am so ill fitted, abandon the name of Cummins for some professional pseudonym, complete my self effacement, and—a thing of tricks and tatters of posing and pretence—go upon the stage It seems my only resort—"to hold the mirror up to Nature" For in the ordinary life, I will confess, no one now seems to regard me as both sane and sober Only upon the stage, I feel convinced, will people take me seriously That will be the end of it I *know* that will be the end of it And yet I will frankly confess all that marks off your actor from your common man I *detest* I am still largely of my Aunt Charlotte's opinion, that playacting is unworthy of a pure minded man's attention, much more participation Even now I would resign my dramatic criticism and try a rest Only I can't get hold of Barnaby Letters of resignation he never notices He says it is against the etiquette of journalism to write to your Editor And when I go to see him, he gives me another big cigar and some strong whisky and soda, and then something always turns up to prevent my explanation



STORY THE SEVENTEENTH

A Slip under the Microscope

OUTSIDE the laboratory windows was a watery-grey fog, and within a close warmth and the yellow light of the green shaded gas lamps that stood two to each table down its narrow length On each table stood a couple of glass jars containing the mangled vestiges of the crayfish, mussels, frogs, and guineapigs upon which the students had been working and down the side of the room, facing the windows, were shelves bearing bleached dissections in spirits, surmounted by a row of beautifully executed anatomical drawings in whitewood frames and overhanging a row of cubical lockers All the doors of the laboratory were panelled with blackboard, and on these were the half erased diagrams of the previous day's work The laboratory was empty, save for the demonstrator, who sat near the preparation room door, and silent, save for a low, continuous murmur, and the clicking of the rocker microtome at which he was working But scattered about the room were traces of numerous students hand bags, polished boxes of instruments, in

one place a large drawing covered by newspaper, and in another a prettily bound copy of *News from Nowhere* a book oddly at variance with its surroundings These things had been put down hastily as the students had arrived and hurried at once to secure their seats in the adjacent lecture theatre Deadened by the closed door, the measured accents of the professor sounded as a featureless muttering

Presently, faint through the closed windows came the sound of the Oratory clock striking the hour of eleven The clicking of the microtome ceased, and the demon strator looked at his watch, rose, thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked slowly down the laboratory towards the lecture theatre door He stood listening for a moment and then his eye fell on the little volume by William Morris He picked it up, glanced at the title, smiled, opened it, looked at the name on the fly leaf, ran the leaves through w th his hand, and put it down Almost immediately the even murmur of the lecturer ceased, there was a sudden burst of pencils rattling on the desks in the lecture theatre, a stirring, a scraping of feet, and a number of voices speaking together Then a firm footfall approached the door, which began to open and stood ajar as some indistinctly heard question arrested the new comer

The demonstrator turned, walked slowly back past the microtome, and left the laboratory by the prepara tion room door As he did so first one, and then several students carrying notebooks entered the laboratory from the lecture theatre and distributed themselves among the little tables, or stood in a group about the doorway They were an exceptionally heterogeneous assembly, for while Oxford and Cambridge still recoil from the blush ing prospect of mixed classes, the College of Science anticipated America in the matter years ago—mixed socially too, for the prestige of the College is high, and its scholarships, free of any age limit, dredge deeper even than do those of the Scotch universities The class

numbered one and twenty, but some remained in the theatre questioning the professor, copying the blackboard diagrams before they were washed off, or examining the special specimens he had produced to illustrate the day's teaching Of the nine who had come into the laboratory three were girls, one of whom, a little fair woman wearing spectacles and dressed in greyish green, was peering out of the window at the fog, while the other two, both wholesome looking, plain faced schoolgirls, unrolled and put on the brown holland aprons they wore while dissecting Of the men, two went down the laboratory to their places, one a pallid, dark bearded man, who had once been a tailor the other a pleasant featured, ruddy young man of twenty, dressed in a well fitting brown suit, young Wedderburn, the son of Wedderburn the eye specialist The others formed a little knot near the theatre door One of these, a dwarfed, spectacled figure with a hunch back sat on a bent wood stool, two others, one a short, dark youngster and the other a flaxen haired, reddish complexioned young man, stood leaning side by side against the slate sink, while the fourth stood facing them, and maintained the larger share of the conversation

This last person was named Hill He was a sturdily built young fellow, of the same age as Wedderburn, he had a white face, dark grey eyes, hair of an indeterminate colour, and prominent, irregular features He talked rather louder than was needful, and thrust his hands deeply into his pockets His collar was frayed and blue with the starch of a careless laundress, his clothes were evidently ready made, and there was a patch on the side of his boot near the toe And as he talked or listened to the others, he glanced now and again towards the lecture theatre door They were discussing the depressing peroration of the lecture they had just heard, the last lecture it was in the introductory course in zoology "From ovum to ovum is the goal of the higher vertebrata," the lecturer had said in his melan

choly tones, and so had neatly rounded off the sketch of comparative anatomy he had been developing The spectacled hunchback had repeated it with noisy appreciation, had tossed it towards the fair haired student with an evident provocation, and had started one of those vague, rambling discussions on generalities so unaccountably dear to the student mind all the world over

"That is our goal, perhaps—I admit it, as far as science goes," said the fair haired student, rising to the challenge "But there are things above science"

"Science," said Hill confidently, "is systematic knowledge Ideas that don't come into the system—must anyhow—be loose ideas" He was not quite sure whether that was a clever saying or a fatuity until his hearers took it seriously

"The thing I cannot understand," said the hunchback, at large, "is whether Hill is a materialist or not"

"There is one thing above matter," said Hill promptly, feeling he made a better point this time, aware, too, of someone in the doorway behind him, and raising his voice a trifle for her benefit, "and that is, the delusion that there is something above matter"

"So we have your gospel at last," said the fair student "It's all a delusion, is it? All our aspirations to lead something more than dogs' lives, all our work for anything beyond ourselves But see how inconsistent you are Your socialism, for instance Why do you trouble about the interests of the race? Why do you concern yourself about the beggar in the gutter? Why are you bothering yourself to lend that book"—he indicated William Morris by a movement of the head—"to everyone in the lab?"

"Girl," said the hunchback indistinctly, and glanced guiltily over his shoulder

The girl in brown, with the brown eyes, had come into the laboratory, and stood on the other side of the table behind him, with her rolled up apron in one hand,

looking over her shoulder, listening to the discussion. She did not notice the hunchback, because she was glancing from Hill to his interlocutor. His consciousness of her presence betrayed itself to her only in his studious ignoring of the fact; but she understood that, and it pleased her. "I see no reason," said he, "why a man should live like a brute because he knows of nothing beyond matter, and does not expect to exist a hundred years hence."

"Why shouldn't he?" said the fair haired student.

"Why *should* he?" said Hill.

"What inducement has he?"

"That's the way with all you religious people. It's all a business of inducements. Cannot a man seek after righteousness for righteousness' sake?"

There was a pause. The fair man answered, with a kind of vocal padding, "But—you see—inducement—when I said inducement," to gain time. And then the hunchback came to his rescue and inserted a question. He was a terrible person in the debating society with his questions, and they invariably took one form—a demand for a definition. "What's your definition of righteousness?" said the hunchback at this stage.

Hill experienced a sudden loss of complacency at this question, but even as it was asked, relief came in the person of Brooks the laboratory attendant, who entered by the preparation room door, carrying a number of freshly killed guineapigs by their hind legs. "This is the last batch of material this session," said the youngster who had not previously spoken. Brooks advanced up the laboratory, smacking down a couple of guineapigs at each table. The rest of the class, scenting the prey from afar, came crowding in by the lecture theatre door, and the discussion perished abruptly as the students who were not already in their places hurried to them to secure the choice of a specimen. There was a noise of keys rattling on split rings as lockers were opened and dissecting instruments taken out. Hill was already

standing by his table, and his box of scalpels was sticking out of his pocket The girl in brown came a step towards him, and leaning over his table said softly, "Did you see that I returned your book Mr Hill?"

During the whole scene she and the book had been vividly present in his consciousness, but he made a clumsy pretence of looking at the book and seeing it for the first time "Oh yes," he said, taking it up "I see Did you like it?"

"I want to ask you some questions about it—some time'

"Certainly," said Hill "I shall be glad' He stopped awkwardly "You liked it?" he said

"It s a wonderful book Only some things I don't understand"

Then suddenly the laboratory was hushed by a curious braying noise It was the demonstrator He was at the blackboard ready to begin the day's instruction, and it was his custom to demand silence by a sound midway between the ' Er" of common intercourse and the blast of a trumpet The girl in brown slipped back to her place it was immediately in front of Hill's, and Hill forgetting her forthwith, took a notebook out of the drawer of his table, turned over its leaves hastily, drew a stumpy pencil from his pocket, and prepared to make a copious note of the coming demonstration For demonstrations and lectures are the sacred text of the College students Books, saving only the Professor's own, you may—it is even expedient to—ignore

Hill was the son of a Landport cobbler, and had been hooked by a chance blue paper the authorities had thrown out to the Landport Technical College He kept himself in London on his allowance of a guinea a week, and found that, with proper care, this also covered his clothing allowance, an occasional waterproof collar, that is and ink and needles and cotton and such like necessaries for a man about town This was his first year and his first session, but the brown

old man in Landport had already got himself detested in many public houses by boasting of his son "the Professor" Hill was a vigorous youngster with a serene contempt for the clergy of all denominations, and a fine ambition to reconstruct the world He [illegible]

Portsea, and acquired chiefly in the wholesale boot factory in which he had worked by day after passing the seventh standard of the Board school He had a considerable gift of speech, as the College Debating Society, which met amidst the crushing machines and mine models in the metallurgical theatre downstairs already recognised—recognised by a violent battering of desks whenever he rose And he was just at that fine emotional age when life opens at the end of a narrow pass like a broad valley at one's feet, full of the promise of wonderful discoveries and tremendous achievements And his own limitations save that he knew that he knew neither Latin nor French, were all unknown to him

At first his interest had been divided pretty equally between his biological work at the College and social and theological theorising an employment which he took in deadly earnest Of a night when the big museum library was not open he would sit on the bed of his room in Chelsea with his coat and a muffler on, and write out the lecture notes and revise his dissection memoranda until Thorpe called him out by a whistle—the landlady objected to open the door to attic visitors—and then the two would go prowling about the shadowy, shiny, gas lit streets, talking, very much in the fashion of the sample just given, of the God Idea and Righteousness and Carlyle and the Reorganisation of Society And in the midst of it all, Hill, arguing not only for Thorpe but for the

casual passer by, would lose the thread of his argument glancing at some pretty painted face that looked meaningly at him as he passed Science and Righteousness! But once or twice lately there had been signs that a third interest was creeping into his life, and he had found his attention wandering from the fate of the mesoblastic somites or the probable meaning of the blastopore, to the thought of the girl with the brown eyes who sat at the table before him

She was a paying student, she descended inconceivable social altitudes to speak to him At the thought of the education she must have had and the accomplishments she must possess, the soul of Hill became abject within him She had spoken to him first over a difficulty about the alisphenoid of a rabbit's skull, and he had found that, in biology at least, he had no reason for self abasement And from that, after the manner of young people starting from any starting point, they got to generalities, and while Hill attacked her upon the question of socialism—some instinct told him to spare her a direct assault upon her religion—she was gathering resolution to undertake what she told herself was his æsthetic education She was a year or two older than he, though the thought never occurred to him The loan of *News from Nowhere* was the beginning of a series of cross loans Upon some absurd first principle of his, Hill had never "wasted time" upon poetry, and it seemed an appalling deficiency to her One day in the lunch hour, when she chanced upon him alone in the little museum where the skeletons were arranged, shamefully eating the bun that constituted his midday meal, she retreated, and returned to lend him, with a slightly furtive air, a volume of Browning He stood sideways towards her and took the book rather clumsily, because he was holding the bun in the other hand And in the retrospect his voice lacked the cheerful clearness he could have wished

That occurred after the examination in comparative

anatomy, on the day before the College turned out its students and was carefully locked up by the officials for the Christmas holidays The excitement of cramming for the first trial of strength had for a little while dominated Hill to the exclusion of his other interests In the forecasts of the result in which every one indulged he was surprised to find that no one regarded him as a possible competitor for the Harvey Commemoration Medal, of which this and the two subsequent examinations disposed It was about this time that Wedderburn, who so far had lived inconspicuously on the uttermost margin of Hill's perceptions began to take on the appearance of an obstacle By a mutual agreement, the nocturnal prowlings with Thorpe ceased for the three weeks before the examination and his landlady pointed out that she really could not supply so much lamp oil at the price He walked to and fro from the College with little slips of mnemonics in his hand, lists of crayfish appendages rabbits' skull bones, and vertebrate nerves, for example, and became a positive nuisance to foot passengers in the opposite direction

But, by a natural reaction Poetry and the girl with the brown eyes ruled the Christmas holiday The pending results of the examination became such a secondary consideration that Hill marvelled at his father's excitement Even had he wished it, there was no comparative anatomy to read in Landport, and he was too poor to buy books, but the stock of poets in the library was extensive, and Hill's attack was magnificently sustained He saturated himself with the fluent numbers of Longfellow and Tennyson, and fortified himself with Shakespeare, found a kindred soul in Pope and a master in Shelley, and heard and fled the siren voices of Eliza Cook and Mrs Hemans But he read no more Browning, because he hoped for the loan of other volumes from Miss Haysman when he returned to London

He walked from his lodgings to the College with that volume of Browning in his shiny black bag, and his mind teeming with the finest general propositions about poetry Indeed, he framed first this little speech and then that with which to grace the return The morning was an exceptionally pleasant one for London, there was a clear hard frost and undeniable blue in the sky a thin haze softened every outline, and warm shafts of sunlight struck between the house blocks and turned the sunny side of the street to amber and gold In the hall of the College he pulled off his glove and signed his name with fingers so stiff with cold that the characteristic dash under the signature he cultivated became a quivering line He imagined Miss Haysman about him everywhere He turned at the staircase, and there, below, he saw a crowd struggling at the foot of the notice board This, possibly, was the biology list He forgot Browning and Miss Haysman for the moment, and joined the scrimmage And at last, with his cheek flattened against the sleeve of the man on the step above him, he read the list—

CLASS I

H J Somers Wedderburn
William Hill

and thereafter followed a second class that is outside our present sympathies It was characteristic that he did not trouble to look for Thorpe on the physics list, but backed out of the struggle at once, and in a curious emotional state between pride over common second class humanity and acute disappointment at Wedderburn's success, went on his way upstairs At the top, as he was hanging up his coat in the passage, the zoological demonstrator, a young man from Oxford who secretly regarded him as a blatant "mugger" of the very worst type, offered his heartiest congratulations

At the laboratory door Hill stopped for a second

to get his breath, and then entered He looked straight up the laboratory and saw all five girl students grouped in their places, and Wedderburn, the once retiring Wedderburn, leaning rather gracefully against the window, playing with the blind tassel and talking apparently to the five of them Now, Hill could talk bravely enough and even overbearingly to one girl, and he could have made a speech to a roomful of girls, but this business of standing at ease and appreciating, fencing, and returning quick remarks round a group was, he knew, altogether beyond him Coming up the staircase his feelings for Wedderburn had been generous, a certain admiration perhaps, a willingness to shake his hand conspicuously and heartily as one who had fought but the first round But before Christmas Wedderburn had never gone up to that end of the room to talk In a flash Hill's mist of vague excitement condensed abruptly to a vivid dislike of Wedderburn Possibly his expression changed As he came up to his place, Wedderburn nodded carelessly to him, and the others glanced round Miss Haysman looked at him and away again, the faintest touch of her eyes "I can't agree with you, Mr Wedderburn," she said

"I must congratulate you on your first class, Mr Hill," said the spectacled girl in green, turning round and beaming at him

"It's nothing," said Hill, staring at Wedderburn and Miss Haysman talking together, and eager to hear what they talked about

"We poor folks in the second class don't think so," said the girl in spectacles

What was it Wedderburn was saying? Something about William Morris! Hill did not answer the girl in spectacles, and the smile died out of his face He could not hear, and failed to see how he could "cut in" Confound Wedderburn! He sat down, opened his bag, hesitated whether to return the volume of Browning forthwith, in the sight of all, and instead

cities of refuge from a sturdy debater And everyone ill clothed or ill dressed, from the cobbler to the cab-runner, was, to Hill's imagination, a man and a brother, a fellow sufferer So that he became, as it were, a champion of the fallen and oppressed, albeit to outward seeming only a self assertive, ill mannered young man, and an unsuccessful champion at that Again and again a skirmish over the afternoon tea that the girl students had inaugurated left Hill with flushed cheeks and a tattered temper, and the debating society noticed a new quality of sarcastic bitterness in his speeches

You will understand now how it was necessary, if only in the interests of humanity, that Hill should demolish Wedderburn in the forthcoming examination and outshine him in the eyes of Miss Haysman, and you will perceive, too, how Miss Haysman fell into some common feminine misconceptions The Hill Wedderburn quarrel, for in his unostentatious way Wedderburn reciprocated Hill's ill veiled rivalry, became a tribute to her indefinable charm, she was the Queen of Beauty in a tournament of scalpels and stumpy pencils To her confidential friend's secret annoyance, it even troubled her conscience, for she was a good girl, and painfully aware, through Ruskin and contemporary fiction, how entirely men's activities are determined by women's attitudes And if Hill never by any chance mentioned the topic of love to her, she only credited him with the finer modesty for that omission

So the time came on for the second examination, and Hill's increasing pallor confirmed the general rumour t[illegible] bread shop nea[illegible] m breaking [illegible] yes intent upon a paper of closely written notes In his bedroom there were propositions about buds and stems round his looking glass, a diagram to catch his eye if soap should chance to spare it, above his washing basin

He missed several meetings of the debating society, but he found the chance encounters with Miss Haysman in the spacious ways of the adjacent art museum or in the little museum at the top of the College, or in the College corridors, more frequent and very restful In particular, they used to meet in a little gallery full of wrought iron chests and gates near the art library, and there Hill used to talk, under the gentle stimulus of her flattering attention, of Browning and his personal ambitions A characteristic she found remarkable in him was his freedom from avarice He contemplated quite calmly the prospect of living all his life on an income below a hundred pounds a year But he was determined to be famous, to make, recognisably in his own proper person, the world a better place to live in He took Bradlaugh and John Burns for his leaders and models, poor, even impecunious, great men But Miss Haysman thought that such lives were deficient on the æsthetic side, by which, though she did not know it, she meant good wall paper and upholstery, pretty books, tasteful clothes, concerts, and meals nicely cooked and respectfully served

At last came the day of the second examination, and the professor of botany, a fussy, conscientious man, re arranged all the tables in a long narrow laboratory to prevent copying, and put his demonstrator on a chair on a table (where he felt, he said, like a Hindoo god) to see all the cheating, and stuck a notice outside the door, "Door closed," for no earthly reason that any human being could discover And all the morning from ten till one the quill of Wedderburn shrieked defiance at Hill's, and the quills of the others chased their leaders in a tire less pack, and so also it was in the afternoon Wedder burn was a little quieter than usual, and Hill's face was hot all day, and his overcoat bulged with textbooks and notebooks against the last moment's revision And the next day, in the morning and in the afternoon, was the practical examination, when sections had to be cut and

slides identified In the morning Hill was depressed because he knew he had cut a thick section, and in the afternoon came the mysterious slip

It was just the kind of thing that the botanical professor was always d ing Like the income tax, it offered a premium to the cheat It was a preparation under the microscope, a little glass slip, held in its place on the stage of the instrument by light steel clips, and the inscription set forth that the slip was not to be mo ed Each student was to go in turn to it, sketch it, write in his book of answers what he considered it to be, and return to his place Now, to move such a slip is a thing one can do by a chance movement of the finger, and in a fraction of a second The professor's reason for decreeing that the slip should not be moved depended on the fact that the object he wanted identified was characteristic of a certain tree stem In the pos tion in which it was placed it was a difficult th ng to recognise but once the slip was moved so as to bring other parts of the preparation into view, its nature was obvious enough

Hill came to this, flushed from a contest with staining re agents, sat down on the little stool before the microscope, turned the mirror to get the best light, and then out of sheer habit, shifted the slip At once he remembered the prohibition, and with an almost continuous motion of his hands, moved it back, and sat paralysed with astonishment at his action

Then, slowly, he turned his head The professor was out of the room, the demonstrator sat aloft on his impromptu rostrum, reading the *Q Jour Mi Sci* the rest of the examinees were busy, and with their backs to him Should he own up to the acc dent now? He knew quite clearly what the thing was It was a lenticel a characteristic preparation from the elder tree His eyes roved over his intent fellow students and Wedderburn suddenly glanced over his shoulder at him with a queer expression in his eyes The mental excitement

that had kept Hill at an abnormal pitch of vigour these two days gave way to a curious nervous tension His book of answers was beside him He did not write down what the thing was, but with one eye at the microscope he began making a hasty sketch of it His mind was full of this grotesque puzzle in ethics that had suddenly been sprung upon him Should he identify it? or should he leave this question unanswered? In that case Wedderburn would probably come out first in the second result How could he tell now whether he might not have identified the thing without shifting it? It was possible that Wedderburn had failed to recognise it, of course Suppose Wedderburn too had shifted the slide? He looked up at the clock There were fifteen minutes in which to make up his mind He gathered up his book of answers and the coloured pencils he used in illustrating his replies and walked back to his seat

He read through his manuscript, and then sat thinking and gnawing his knuckle It would look queer now if he owned up He *must* beat Wedderburn He forgot the examples of those starry gentlemen, John Burns and Bradlaugh Besides, he reflected, the glimpse of the rest of the slip he had had was after all quite accidental, forced upon him by chance, a kind of providential revelation rather than an unfair advantage It was not nearly so dishonest to avail himself of that as it was of Broome, who believed in the efficacy of prayer, to pray daily for a first class "Five minutes more," said the demonstrator, folding up his paper and be coming observant Hill watched the clock hands until two minutes remained, then he opened the book of answers, and, with hot ears and an affectation of ease gave his drawing of the lenticel its name

When the second pass list appeared, the previ[illegible] positions of Wedderburn and Hill were reversed, [illegible] the spectacled girl in green, who knew the demons[illegible] in private life (where he was practically human[illegible]

that in the result of the two examinations taken together Hill had the advantage of a mark—167 to 166 out of a possible 200 Everyone admired Hill in a way, though the suspicion of "mugging" clung to him But Hill was to find congratulations and Miss Haysman's enhanced opinion of him, and even the decided decline in the crest of Wedderburn, tainted by an unhappy memory He felt a remarkable access of energy at first, and the note of a democracy marching to triumph returned to his debating society speeches he worked at his comparative anatomy with tremendous zeal and effect, and he went on with his æsthetic education But through it all a vivid little picture was continually coming before his mind's eye—of a sneakish person manipulating a slide

No human being had witnessed the act, and he was cocksure that no higher power existed to see it, but for all that it worried him Memories are not dead things but alive they dwindle in disuse, but they harden and develop in all sorts of queer ways if they are being continually fretted Curiously enough, though at the time he perceived clearly that the shifting was accidental, as the days wore on his memory became confused about it, until at last he was not sure—although he assured himself that he *was* sure—whether the movement had been absolutely involuntary Then it is possible that Hill's dietary was conducive to morbid conscientiousness, a breakfast frequently eaten in a hurry, a midday bun, and at such hours after five as chanced to be convenient, such meat as his means determined, usually in a chop house in a back street off the Prompton Road Occasionally he treated himself to threepenny or ninepenny classics, and they usually represented a suppression of potatoes or chops It is indisputable that outbreaks of self abasement and emotional revival have a distinct relation to periods of scarcity But apart from this influence on the feelings, there was in Hill a distinct aversion to falsity that the blasphemous Landport cobbler had inculcated by strap and tongue from his

arl est ears Of one fact ab t pr l a h s I am on nce l they may b —they y a vo d of subtlety rev l rs of ho y n l akers, n l n sch evo s kna es but the l e h v If t were not so if hey had the f est g a p f he idea of comprom se they would s nply be l er l h nen And moreover th s memory p ne l l s r g d for M ss Ha sman For the nov so ev d n l p eferred m to Wedderburn that he felt s re he cared f r her nd began re proca ng her attent ns by t n d marks f *personal regar l at one me he even bo ght a b nch* f v olets carr ed it ab ut in h s pocket and pr d ed w th a stum bl ng explana o hered and fea l n the allery of ol l iron It p s ned t o the den nc1a ion f cap tal st d shonesty ha l ad been one of h s l fe s leasures And lastly t p son l h s tr umph in Wedle b rn Previously he had been Wedderburn s uper or n h s o vn eyes and l ad raged s nply at a want f re o n on Now he began to fret a the darker p n of pos ve infer or ty He fan ed l e found s fica ons f r his po t on in B o n ng but they an l ed on analys s At last—m ved c r o sly en gh v ex ly the same mot ve f rces that had re lted in l sl nesty—l e went to Professor B ndon and made clean breas of the whole affa r As H ll was a pa l den Profes or B ndon d d not ask h m to s t l n nd he stood before the professor s desk as he made h s onfess on

It s a cur o s story sa d Professor B ndon slo vly ea s ng ho v the th ng reflected on h ms lf and then et ng h s anger r se — A most remarkable story I an t nderstan l your do ng it and I can t un lerstand h s avo al You re a type of st dent—Cambr lge men wo l l never dream—I suppose I ought to have thought —W l *y d d y* 1 cheat?

I d dn t cheat sa d H ll

B yo l ave j st been tell ng me you d d

I tho ght I expla ned—



"Either you cheated or you did not cheat"—

"I said my motion was involuntary"

"I am not a metaphysician, I am a servant of science—of fact You were told not to move the slip You did move the slip If that is not cheating—"

"If I was a cheat," said Hill, with the note of hysterics in his voice, "should I come here and tell you?"

"Your repentance, of course, does you credit," said Professor Bindon, "but it does not alter the original facts"

"No, sir," said Hill, giving in in utter self abasement

"Even now you cause an enormous amount of trouble The examination list will have to be revised"

"I suppose so, sir"

"Suppose so? Of course it must be revised And I don't see how I can conscientiously pass you"

"Not pass me?" said Hill "Fail me?"

"It's the rule in all examinations Or where should we be? What else did you expect? You don't want to shirk the consequences of your own acts?"

"I thought, perhaps"—said Hill And then, "Fail me? I thought, as I told you, you would simply deduct the marks given for that slip"

"Impossible!" said Bindon "Besides, it would still leave you above Wedderburn Deduct only the marks—Preposterous! The Departmental Regulations distinctly say—"

"But it's my own admission, sir"

"The Regulations say nothing whatever of the manner in which the matter comes to light They simply provide—"

"It will ruin me If I fail this examination, they won't renew my scholarship"

"You should have thought of that before"

"But, sir, consider all my circumstances—"

"I cannot consider anything Professors in this College are machines The Regulations will not even

let us recon mend ou r students for appo n ments I am a machine and you have worked me I have to do—

' It s very hard s r

" Poss bly it is

' If I am to be fa led th s examina on I m ght as well go home at once

That is as you think proper P n lon s vo ce softened a l ttle he perce ved he had been unju t and provided he did not contrad ct h s self he was d posed to amelioration As a pr vate person he sa d I think this confession of yo rs goes far to m t gate your offence But yo have set the mach nery in mot on and now it m st take its co rse I—I am really sorry you gave way

A wave of emot on prevented Hill from answer ng S ddenly very vividly he saw the heav ly l ned face of the old Landport cobbler h s father Good Go l What a fool I have been he sa d hotly and abr p ly

I hope sa d Bindon that it will be a lesson to you

But cur ously enough they were not think ng of quite the same nd scretion

There was a pa se

I would l ke a day to think s r and then I w ll le you know—about go ng home I mean sa d H ll moving towards the door

The next day H ll s place was vacant The spectacled

Heard what?

There was cheat ng n the examinat on

Cheating! sa d Wedderburn with his face sud denly hot How?

' That sl de —

Moved? Never!"

"Either you cheated or you did not cheat" —

"I said my motion was involuntary"

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THE RECONCILIATION



THE RECONCILIATION

TEMPLE had scarcely been with Findlay five minutes before he felt his old resentments, and the memory of that unforgettable wrong growing vivid again But with the infatuation of his good resolution still upon him, he maintained the air of sham reconciliation that Findlay had welcomed so eagerly *They talked of this* and that, carefully avoiding the matter of the separation Temple at first spoke chiefly of his travels He stood between the cabinet of minerals and the fireplace, his whisky on the mantel board, while Findlay sat with his chair pushed back from his writing desk on which were scattered the dozen little skulls of hedgehogs and shrew mice upon which he had been working

Temple's eye fell upon them, and abruptly brought his mind round from the topic of West Africa "And you,' said Temple "While I have been wandering I suppose you have been going on steadily"

"Drumming along," said Findlay

"To the Royal Society and fame and all the things we used to dream about—how long is it?"

"Five years—since our s udent days"

Temple glanced round t e room, and his eye rested

for a moment on a round greyish drab object that lay in a corner near the door "The same fat books and folios, only more of them, the same smell of old bones, and a dissection—is it the same one?—in the window Fame is *your* mistress"

"Fame," said Findlay "But it's hardly fame The herd outside say, 'Eminence in comparative anatomy'"

"Eminence in comparative anatomy No marrying—no avarice"

"None,' said Findlay, glancing askance at him

"I suppose it's the happiest way of living But it wouldn't be the thing for me Excitement—but, I say!"—his eye had fallen again on that fungoid shape of drabbish grey—"there's a limit to scientific inhumanity You really mustn't keep your door open with a human brainpan"

He went across the room as he spoke and picked the thing up "Brainpan!" said Findlay "Oh, *that!* Man alive, that's not a brainpan Where's your science?"

"No I see it's not," said Temple, carrying the object in his hand as he came back to his former position and scrutinising it curiously "But what the devil is it?"

"Don't you know?" said Findlay

The thing was about thrice the size of a man's hand like a rough watch pocket of thick bone

Findlay laughed almost naturally. "You have a bad memory—it's a whale's ear bone"

"Of course," said Temple, his appearance of interest vanishing "The *bulla* of a whale I've forgotten a lot of these things"

He half turned, and put the thing on the top of the cabinet beside Findlay's dumb bells

"If you are serious in your music hall proposal," he said, reverting to a jovial suggestion of Findlay's "I am at your service I m afraid—I may find *myself* a little old for that sort of thing—I haven't tried one for ages"

"But we are meeting to commemorate youth," said Findlay

"*And bury our early manhood*," said Temple "Well, well—yes let us go to the music hall, by all means, if you desire it It is trivial—and appropriate We want no tragic issues"

When the men returned to Findlay's study the little clock in the dimness on the mantel shelf was pointing to half past one After the departure the little brown room, with its books and bones, was undisturbed, save for the two visits Findlay's attentive servant paid, to see to the fire and to pull down the blinds and draw the curtains The ticking of the clock was the only sound in the quiet Now and then the fire flickered and stirred, sending blood red reflections chasing the shadows across the ceiling and bringing into ghostly transitory prominence some grotesque grouping of animals' bones or skulls upon the shelves At last the stillness was broken by the unlatching and slamming of the heavy street door and the sound of unsteady footsteps approaching along the passage Then the door opened, and the two men came into the warm firelight

Temple came in first, his brown face flushed with drink, his coat unbuttoned, his hands deep in his trousers pockets His Christmas resolution had long since dissolved in alcohol He was a little puzzled to find himself in Findlay's company And his fuddled brain insisted upon inopportune reminiscence He walked straight to the fire and stood before it, an exaggerated black figure, staring down into the red glow "After all" he said, "we are fools to quarrel—fools to quarrel about a little thing like that Damned fools!"

Findlay went to the writing table and felt about for *the matches with quivering hands*

"It wasn't my doing" he said

"It wasn't your doing" said Temple "Nothing

ever was your doing You are always in the right—Findlay the all right"

Findlay's attention was concentrated upon the lamp His hand was unsteady, and he had some difficulty in turning up the wicks, one got jammed down and the other flared furiously When at last it was lit and turned up, he came up to Temple "Take your coat off old man, and have some more whisky," he said "That was a ripping little girl in the skirt dance"

"Fools to quarrel," said Temple slowly, and then woke up to Findlay's words "Heigh?"

'Take off your coat and sit down," said Findlay, moving up the little metal table and producing cigars and a siphon and whisky "That lamp gives an infernally bad light, but it is all I have Something wrong with the oil Did you notice the dodge of that stone smashing trick?'

Temple remained erect and gloomy, staring into the fire "Fools to quarrel," he said Findlay was now half drunk, and his finesse began to leave him Temple had been drinking heavily, and was now in a curious rambling stage And Findlay's one idea now was to close this curious reunion

"There's no woman worth a man's friendship," said Temple abruptly

He sat down in an easy chair, poured out and drank a dose of whisky and lithia The idea of friendship took possession of him, and he became reminiscent of student days and student adventures For some time it was, "Do you remember" this, and "Do you remember" that And Findlay grew cheerful again

"They were glorious times," said Findlay, pouring whisky into Temple's glass

Then Temple startled him by abruptly reverting to that bitter quarrel "No woman in the world," he said "Curse them!"

He began to laugh stupidly "After all," he said "in the end"

"Oh, damn!" said Findlay

"All very well for you to swear" said Temple, "but you forget about me 'Tain't your place to swear If only you'd left things alone——'

"I thought the password was forget" said Findlay

Temple stared into the fire for a space "Forget," he said, and then with a curious return to a clarity of speech, "Findlay, I'm getting drunk"

"Nonsense, man, take some more"

Temple rose out of his chair with a look of one awakening "There's no reason why I should get drunk, because——'

"Drink,' said Findlay "and forget it"

"Faugh! I want to stick my head in water I want to think What the deuce am I doing here, with *you* of all people?"

"Nonsense! *Talk* and forget it if you won't drink Do you remember old Jason and the boxing gloves? I wonder whether you could put up your fives now"

Temple stood with his back to the fire, his brain spinning with drink, and the old hatred of Findlay came back in flood He sought in his mind for some offensive thing to say, and his face grew dark Findlay saw that a crisis was upon him and he cursed under his breath His air of conviviality, his pose of hearty comforter grew more and more difficult But what else was there to do?

"Old Jason—full of science and as slow as an elephant!—but he made boxers of us Do you remember our little set to—at that place in Gower Street?"

To show his innocent liveliness, his freedom from preoccupation, Findlay pushed his chair aside, and stepped out into the middle of the room There he began to pose in imitation of Jason and to give a

on the brink of an explosion, was almost too much for his nerves He felt his display of high spirits was a mistake but he must go through with it now

Don t stand glooming there, man You re in just that state when the world looks black as ink Drink yourself merry again There's no woman in the world worth a man s friendship—that's agreed upon Come and have a bout with these gloves of mine—four ounce gloves There s nothing sets the blood and spirits stirring like that"

"All right said Temple, quite mechanically And then waking up to what he was doing "Where are the other gloves?

"Over there in the corner On the top of the mineral cabinet By Jove! Temple, this is like old times!"

Temple, quivering strangely, went to the corner He meant to thrash Findlay, and knew that in spite of his lighter weight he would do it Yet it seemed puerile and inadequate to the pitch of absurdity, for the wrong Findlay had done him was great And putting his hand on something pale in the shadow, he touched the *bulla* of the whale The temptation was like a lightning flash He slipped one glove on his left hand, and thrust the fingers of his right into the cavity of the *bulla* It took all his fingers, and covered his knuckles and the back of his hand And it was so oddly like a thumbless boxing glove! Just the very shape of the padded part His spirits rose abruptly at the sudden prospect of a savage joke—how savage it would be, he did not know Meanwhile Findlay, with a nervous alacrity, moved the lamp into the corner behind the arm chair, and thrust his writing desk into the window bay

"Come on," said Findlay, behind him, and abruptly he turned

Findlay looked straight into his eyes, on guard, his hands half open He did not see the strange substitute for a glove that covered Temple's right hand Both

men were gone so far towards drunkenness that their power of observation was obscured For a moment they stood squaring at one another, the host smiling and his guest smiling also, but with his teeth set two dark figures swaying in the firelight and the dim lamp light Then Findlay struck at his opponent's face with his left hand As he did so Temple ducked slightly to the left, and struck savagely over Findlay's shoulder at his temple with the bone-covered fist The blow was given with such tremendous force that it sent Findlay reeling sideways, half stunned, and overcome with astonishment The thing struck his ear, and the side of his face went white at the blow He struggled to keep his footing, and as he did so Temple's gloved right hand took him in the chest and sent him spinning to the foot of the cigar cabinet

Findlay's eyes were wide open with astonishment Temple was a lighter man by a stone or more than himself, and he did not understand how he had been felled He was not stunned, although he was so dulled by the blow as not to notice the blood running down his cheek from his ear He laughed insincerely, and, almost pulling the cigar cabinet over, scrambled to his feet made as if he would speak, and put up his hand instinctively as Temple struck out at him again, a feint with the left hand Findlay was an expert boxer, and, anticipating another right hand blow over the ear, struck sharply at once with his own left hand in Temple's face, throwing his full weight into the blow, and dodging Temple's reply

Temple's [illegible]

had left him, stripped of all that education had ever done for him There remained now only the savage man animal, the creature that thirsts for blood With a half bestial cry, he flung himself upon Findlay as he jumped back, and with a sudden sweep of his right

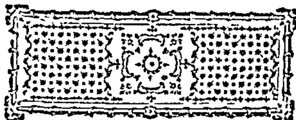
arm cut down the defence, breaking Findlay's arm just above the wrist, and following with three rapid blows of the *bulla* upon the face Findlay gave an inarticulate cry of astonishment countered weakly once, and then went down like a felled ox As he fell, Temple fell upon the top of him There was a smash as the lamp went down

The lamp was extinguished as it fell, and left the room red and black Findlay struck heavily at Temple's ribs, and Temple, with his left elbow at Findlay's neck swung up his right arm and struck down a sledge hammer blow upon the face, and again, and yet again until the body beneath his knees had ceased to writhe

Then suddenly his frenzy left him at the voice of a woman shrieking so that it filled the room He looked up and crouched motionless as he heard and saw the study door closing and heard the patter of feet retreating in panic Then he looked down and saw the thing that had once been the face of Findlay For an awful minute he remained kneeling agape

Then he staggered to his feet and stood over Findlay's body in the glow of the dying fire, like a man awakening from a nightmare Suddenly he perceived the *bulla* on his hand, covered with blood and hair, and began to understand what had happened In a sudden horror he flung the diabolical thing from him It struck the floor near the cigar cabinet, rolled for a yard or so on its edge, and came to rest in almost the position it had occupied when he had first set eyes on it To Temple's excited imagination it seemed to be lying at exactly the same spot, the sole and sufficient cause of Findlay's death and his own

MY FIRST AEROPLANE



MY FIRST AEROPLANE

("ALAUDA MAGNA")

MY First Aeroplane! What vivid memories of youth that recalls!

Far back it was, in the spring of 1912, that I acquired 'Alauda Magna' the great Lark, for so I christened her, and I was then a slender young man of four and twenty, with hair—beautiful blond hair—all over my adventurous young head I was a dashing young fellow enough, in spite of the slight visual defect that obliged me to wear spectacles on my prominent, aquiline, but by no means shapeless nose—the typical flyer's nose I was a good runner and swimmer, a vegetarian as ever, an all wooler, and an ardent advocate of the extremest views in every direction about everything Precious little in the way of a movement got started that I wasn't in I owned two motor bicycles, and an enlarged photograph of me at that remote date, in leather skull cap, goggles, and gauntlets, still adorns my study fire place I was also a great flyer of war kites, and a voluntary scout master of high repute From the first

beginnings of the boom in flying, therefore, I was naturally eager for the fray

I chafed against the tears of my widowed mother for a time and at last told her I could endure it no longer "If I'm not the first to fly in Mintonchester," I said, "I leave Mintonchester I'm your own son, mummy, and that's *me!*"

And it didn't take me a week to place my order when she agreed

I found one of the old price lists the other day in a drawer, full of queer woodcuts of still queerer contrivances What a time that was! An incredulous world had at last consented to believe that it could fly, and in addition to the motor car people and the bicycle people, and so on, a hundred new, unheard-of firms were turning out aeroplanes of every size and pattern to meet the demand Amazing prices they got for them too—three hundred and fifty was cheap for the things! I find four hundred and fifty, five hundred, five hundred *guineas* in this list of mine; and many as capable of flight as oak trees! They were sold, too, without any sort of guarantee, and with the merest apology for instruction Some of the early aeroplane companies paid nearly 200 per cent on their ordinary shares in those early years

How well I remember the dreams I had—and the doubts!

The dreams were all of wonder in the air I saw myself rising gracefully from my mother's paddock, clearing the hedge at the end, circling up to get over the vicar's pear trees, and away between the church steeple and the rise of Withycombe, towards the market place Lord! how they would stare to see me! "Young Mr Betts again!" they would say "We *knew* he'd do it"

I would circle and perhaps wave a handkerchief, and then I meant to go over Lupton's gardens to the grounds of Sir Digby Foster There a certain fair denizen might glance from the window . .

Ah, youth! Youth!

My doubts were all of the make I should adopt, the character of the engines I should choose

I remember my wild rush on my motor bike to London to see the things and give my order, the day of muddy traffic dodging as I went from one shop to another, my growing exasperation at hearing everywhere the same refrain, "Sold out! Can't undertake to deliver before the beginning of April"

Not me!

I got "Alauda Magna" at last at a little place in Blackfriars Road She was an order thrown on the firm's hands at the eleventh hour by the death of the purchaser through another maker, and I ran my modest bank account into an overdraft to get her—to this day I won't confess the price I paid for her Poor little Mumsy! Within a week she was in my mother's paddock, being put together after transport by a couple of not too intelligent mechanics

The joy of it! And a sort of adventurous tremulousness I'd had no lessons—all the qualified teachers were booked up at stupendous fees for months ahead, but it wasn't in my quality to stick at a thing like that! I couldn't have endured three days' delay I assured my mother I had had lessons, for her peace of mind—it is a [illegible]

[illegible]

sciousness of half [illegible] peering at me through the hedge, and only deterred by our new trespass board and the disagreeable expression of Snape, our trusted gardener, who was partly mowing the grass and partly on sentry go with his scythe, from swarming into the meadow I lit a cigarette and watched the workmen sagely, and we engaged an elderly unemployed named Snorticombe to keep watch all night to save the thing from meddlers In those days, you must understand, an aeroplane was a sign and a wonder

"Alauda Magna" was a darling for her time, though nowadays I suppose she would be received with derisive laughter by every schoolboy in the land She was a monoplane and, roughly speaking, a Bleriot, and she had the dearest, neatest seven cylinder forty horse power G K C engine, with its G B S fly wheel, that you can possibly imagine I spent an hour or so tuning her up—she had a deafening purr, rather like a machine gun in action—until the vicar sent round to say that he was writing a sermon upon "Peace" and was unable to concentrate his mind on that topic until I desisted I took his objection in good part, and, after a culminating volley and one last lingering look, started for a stroll round the town

In spite of every endeavour to be modest I could not but feel myself the cynosure of every eye I had rather carelessly forgotten to change my leggings and breeches I had bought for the occasion, and I was also wearing my leather skull cap with ear flaps carelessly adjusted so that I could hear what people were saying I should think I had half the population under fifteen at my heels before I was halfway down the High Street

"You going to fly, Mr Betts?" says one cheeky youngster

"Like a bird!" I said

"Don't you fly till we comes out of school," says another

It was a sort of Royal progress that evening for me I visited old Lupton, the horticulturist, and he could hardly conceal what a great honour he thought it He took me over his new greenhouse—he had now got he said, three acres of surface under glass—and showed me all sorts of clever dodges he was adopting in the way of intensive culture, and afterwards we went down to the end of his old flower garden and looked at his bees When I came out my retinue of kids was still waiting for me, reinforced Then I went round by Paramors and dropped into the Bull and Horses, just as if there

wasn't anything particular up, for a lemon squash. Everybody was talking about my aeroplane They just shut up for a moment when I came in and then burst out with questions It's odd nowadays to remember all that excitement I answered what they had to ask me and refrained from putting on any side and afterwards Miss Flyteman and I went into the commercial room and turned over the pages of various illustrated journals and compared the pictures with my machine in a quiet, unassuming sort of way Everybody encouraged me to go up—everybody

I lay stress on that because, as I was soon to discover, the tides and ebbs of popular favour are among the most inexplicable and inconsistent things in the world

I particularly remember old Cheeseman, the pork-butcher, whose pigs I killed saying over and over again, in a tone of perfect satisfaction, "You won't 'ave any difficulty in going *up* you won t There won't be any difficulty 'bout going *up*" And winking and nodding to the other eminent tradesmen there assembled

I *hadn't* much difficulty in going up "Alauda Magna" was a cheerful lifter and the roar and spin of her engine had hardly begun behind me before she *was off her wheels—snap, snap, they came up above the sk*s gliders—and swaying swiftly across the meadows towards the vicarage hedge She had a sort of onward roll to her, rather like the movement of a corpulent but very buoyant woman

I had just a glimpse of brave little mother, trying

fancied I heard a resounding whack on our new Trespassers will be Prosecuted board and I saw the crowd of people in the lane running this way and that from my loud humming approach but it was only after the

flight was all over that I realised what that fool Snortcombe had been up to It would seem he had thought the monster needed tethering—I won't attempt to explain the mysteries of his mind—and he had tied about a dozen yards of rope to the end of either wing and fixed them firmly to a couple of iron guy posts that belonged properly to the Badminton net Up they came at the tug of "Alauda," and now they were trailing and dancing and leaping along behind me, and taking the most vicious dives and lunges at everything that came within range of them Poor old Templecom got it hottest in the lane, I'm told—a frightful whack on his bald head, and then we ripped up the vicar's cucumber frames, killed and scattered his parrot, smashed the upper pane of his study window, and just missed the housemaid as she stuck her head out of the upper bed room window I didn't, of course, know anything of this at the time—it was on a lower plane altogether from my proceedings I was steering past his vicarage —a narrow miss—and trying to come round to clear the pear trees at the end of the garden —which I did with a graze—and the trailers behind me sent leaves and branches flying this way and that I had reason to thank Heaven for my sturdy little G K C's

Then I was fairly up for a time

I found it much more confusing than I had expected the engine made such an infernal whir r row for one thing, and the steering tugged and struggled like a thing alive But I got her heading over the market place all right We buzzed over Stunt's the greengrocer, and my trailers hopped up his back premises and made a sanguinary mess of the tiles on his roof, and sent an avalanche of broken chimney pot into the crowded street below Then the thing dipped—I suppose one of the guy posts tried to anchor for a second in Stunt's rafters—and I had the hardest job to clear the Bull and Horses stables I didn't, as a matter of fact, completely clear them The ski like alighting runners touched the

ridge for a moment and the left wing bent against the top of the chimney stack and floundered over it in an awkward, destructive manner

I'm told that my trailers whirled about the crowded market place in the most diabolical fashion as I dipped and recovered, but I'm inclined to think all this part of the story has been greatly exaggerated Nobody was killed, and I couldn t have been half a minute from the time I appeared over Stunt s to the time when I slid off the stable roof and in among Lupton s glass If people had taken reasonable care of themselves instead of gaping at me, they wouldn t have got hurt I had enough to do without pointing out to people that they were likely to be hit by an iron guy post which had seen fit to follow me If anyone ought to have warned them it was that fool Snorticombe Indeed, what with the incalculable damage done to the left wing and one of the cylinders getting out of rhythm and making an ominous catch in the whirr, I was busy enough for any thing on my own private personal account

I suppose I am in a manner of speaking responsible for knocking old Dudney off the station bus, but I don't see that I can be held answerable for the subsequent evolutions of the bus, which ended after a charge among the market stalls in Cheeseman's shop window nor do I see that I am to blame because an idle and ill dis ciplined crowd chose to stampede across a stock of carelessly distributed earthenware and overturned a butter stall I was a mere excuse for all this mis behaviour

I didn't exactly fall into Lupton's glass, and I didn't exactly drive over it I think ricochetting describes my passage across his premises as well as any single word can

It was the queerest sensation, being carried along by this big, buoyant thing, which had, as it were, bolted with me, and feeling myself alternately lifted up and then dropped with a scrunch upon a fresh greenhouse roof, in spite of all my efforts to get control And the

infinite relief when at last, at the fifth or sixth pounce, I rose—and kept on rising!

I seemed to forget everything disagreeable instantly. The doubt whether after all "Alauda Magna" was good for flying vanished. She was evidently very good. We whirred over the wall at the end, with my trailers still bumping behind, and beyond one of them hitting a cow, which died next day, I don't think I did the slightest damage to anything or anybody all across the breadth of Cheeseman's meadow. Then I began to rise, steadily but surely, and, getting the thing well in hand, came swooping round over his piggeries to give Mintonchester a second taste of my quality.

I meant to go up in a spiral until I was clear of all the trees and things and circle about the church spire. Hitherto I had been so concentrated on the plunges and tugs of the monster I was driving, and so deafened by the uproar of my engine, that I had noticed little of the things that were going on below, but now I could make out a little lot of people, headed by Lupton with a garden fork, rushing obliquely across the corner of Cheeseman's meadow. It puzzled me for a second to imagine what they could think they were after.

Up I went, whirring and swaying, and presently got a glimpse down the High Street of the awful tangle everything had got into in the market place. I didn't at the time connect that extraordinary smash up with my transit.

It was the jar of my whack against the weathercock that really stopped my engines. I've never been able to make out quite how it was I hit the unfortunate vane, perhaps the twist I had given my left wing on Stunt's roof spoilt my steering, but, anyhow, I hit the gaudy thing and bent it, and for a lengthy couple of seconds I wasn't by any means sure whether I wasn't going to dive straight down into the market place. I got her right by a supreme effort—I think the people I didn't smash might have squeezed out one drop of

gratitude for that—drove pitching at the tree tops of Withycombe, got round, and realised the engines were stopping There wasn't any time to survey the country and arrange for a suitable landing place there wasn't any chance of clearing the course It wasn't my fault if a quarter of the population of Mintonchester was swarming out over Cheeseman's meadows It was the only chance I had to land without a smash and I took it Down I came, a steep glide, doing the best I could for myself

Perhaps I did bowl a few people over, but progress is progress

And I had to kill his pigs It was a case of either dropping among the pigs and breaking my rush, or going full tilt into the corrugated iron piggeries beyond I might have been cut to ribbons And pigs are born to die

I stopped, and stood up stiffly upon the framework and looked behind me It didn't take me a moment to realise that Mintonchester meant to take my poor efforts to give it an Aviation Day all to itself in a spirit of ferocious ingratitude

The air was full of the squealing of the two pigs I had pinned under my machine and the bawling of the nearer spectators Lupton occupied the middle distance with a garden fork, with the evident intention of jabbing it into my stomach I am always pretty cool and quick witted in an emergency I dropped off poor "Alauda Magna" like a shot, dodged through the piggery, went up by Frobisher's orchard, nipped over the yard wall of Hinks's cottages and was into the police station by the back way before anyone could get within fifty feet of me

"Halloa!" said Inspector Nenton, "smashed the thing?"

"No," I said, "but people seem to have got some thing the matter with them I want to be locked in a cell"

For a fortnight, do you know, I wasn't allowed to come near my own machine I went home from the police station as soon as the first excitement had blown over a little, going round by Love Lane and the Chart so as not to arouse any febrile symptoms I found mother frightfully indignant, you can be sure, at the way I had been treated And there, as I say, was I, standing a sort of siege in the upstairs rooms, and sturdy little "Alauda Magna," away in Cheeseman's fields being walked round and stared at by everybody in the world but me Cheeseman's theory was that he had seized her There came a gale one night, and the dear thing was blown clean over the hedge among Lupton's greenhouses again, and then Lupton sent round a silly note to say that if we didn't remove her she would be sold to defray expenses, going off into a long tirade about damages and his solicitor So mother posted off to Clamps', the furniture removers at Upnorton Corner, and they got hold of a timber waggon, and popular feeling had allayed sufficiently before that arrived for me to go in person to superintend the removal There she lay like a great moth above the *debris* of some cultural projects of Lupton's, scarcely damaged herself except for a hole or so and some bent rods and stays in the left wing and a smashed skid But she was be spattered with pigs' blood and pretty dirty

I went at once by instinct for the engines, and had them in perfect going order before the timber waggon arrived

A sort of popularity returned to me with that procession home With the help of a swarm of men we got "Alauda Magna" poised on the waggon, and then I took my seat to see she balanced properly, and a miscellaneous team of seven horses started to tow her home It was nearly one o'clock when we got to that, and all the children turned out to shout and jeer We couldn't go by Pook's Lane and the vicarage, because the walls are too high and narrow, and so we headed across

Cheeseman's meadows for Stokes' Waste and the Common, to get round by that *de our*

I was silly, of course, to do what I d d—I see that now—but sitting up there on my triumphal car with all the multitude about me excited me I got a kind of glory on I really only meant to let the propellers spin as a sort of hurrahing, but I was carried away Whuz z z z! It was like something blowing up, and behold! I was sailing and plunging away from my wain across the common for a second flight

"Lord!" I said

I fully meant to run up the air a little way, come about, and take her home to our paddock, but those early aeroplanes were very uncertain things

After all, it wasn t such a very bad shot to land in the vicarage garden, and that practically is what I did And I don't see that it was my fault that all the vicarage and a lot of friends should be having lunch on the lawn [illegible]

way they had arranged the table I can t help it if Fate decided that my return wasn't to be so ignominious as all that, and swooped me down on the lot of them

They were having their soup They had calculated on me for the dessert, I suppose

To this day I can t understand how it is I didn't kill the vicar The forward edge of the left wing got him just under the chin and carried him back a dozen yards He must have had neck vertebræ like steel and even then I was amazed his head didn't come off Perhaps he was holding on underneath, but I can't imagine where If it hadn't been for the fascination of his staring face I think I could have avoided the veranda, but, as it was, that took me by surprise That was a fair crumple up The wood must have just rotted away

under its green paint, but, anyhow, it and the climbing roses and the shingles above and everything snapped and came down like stage scenery, and I and the engines and the middle part drove clean through the French windows on to the drawing room floor It was jolly lucky for me, I think, that the French windows weren't shut There's no unpleasanter way of getting hurt in the world than flying suddenly through thin window glass, and I think I ought to know. There was a frightful jawbation, but the vicar was out of action, that was one good thing Those deep, sonorous sentences! But perhaps they would have calmed things

That was the end of "Alauda Magna," my first aeroplane I never even troubled to take her away I hadn't the heart to

And then the storm burst

The idea [illegible]
pay for [illegible]
broken [illegible]
Oh! and [illegible]
death in the memory of the oldest inhabitant The tariff ruled high, too Cows were twenty five to thirty pounds and upward, pigs about a pound each, with no reduction for killing a quantity, verandas—verandas were steady at forty five guineas Dinner services, too, were up, and so were tiling and all branches of the building trade It seemed to certain persons in Mintonchester, I believe, that an era of unexampled prosperity had dawned upon the place—only limited, in fact, by the solvency of me and mother The vicar tried the old "sold to defray expenses" racket, but I told him he might sell

I pleaded defective machinery and the hand of God, did my best to shift the responsibility on to the firm in Blackfriars Road, and, as an additional precaution, filed my petition in bankruptcy I really hadn't any property in the world, thanks to mother's goodness, except my two motor bicycles, which the brutes took, my photo-

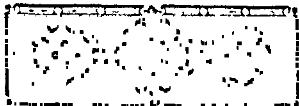
graphic dark room and a lot of bound books on aeronautics and progress generally Mother, of course, wasn t responsible She hadn t lifted a w ng

Well, for all that, disagreeables p led up so heavily on me, what with being shouted after by a rag tag and bobtail of schoolboys and golf caddies and hobbledehoys when I went out of doors threatened with personal violence by stupid people like old Lupton who wouldn't understand that a man can t pay what he hasn t got pestered by the wives of various gentlemen who saw fit to become out-of works on the strength of alleged injuries, and served with all sorts of silly summonses for all sorts of fancy offences such as misch evous mischief and manslaughter and wilful damage and trespass that I simply had to go away from Mintonchester to Italy and leave poor little mother to manage them in her own solid, undemonstrative way Which she did, I must admit like a Brick

They d dn t get much out of her, anyhow, but she had to break up our little home at Mintonchester and join me at Arosa, in spite of her dislike of Italian cook ing She found me already a bit of a celebrity because I had made a record, so it seemed, by falling down three separate crevasses on three successive days But that s another story altogether

From start to finish I reckon that first aeroplane cost my mother over nine hundred pounds If I hadn't put my foot down and she had stuck to her original inten tion of paying all the damage, it would have cost her three thousand But it was worth it It was worth it I wish I could live it all over again, and many an old codger like me sits at home now and deplores those happy, vanished, adventurous times, when any lad of spirit was free to fly—and go anywhere—and smash anything—and discuss the question afterwards of just what the damages amounted to and what his legal liability might be

LITTLE MOTHER UP THE MORDERBERG



LITTLE MOTHER UP THE MORDERBERG

I think I mentioned when I was telling how I sailed my first aeroplane that I made a kind of record at Arosa by falling down three separate crevasses on three successive days That was before little mother followed me out there When she came, I could see at a glance she was tired and jaded and worried, and so, instead of letting her fret about in the hotel and get into a wearing tangle of gossip, I packed her and two knapsacks up, and started off on a long, refreshing, easy going walk northward, until a blister on her foot stranded us at the Magenruhe Hotel on the Sneejoch She was for going on, blister or no blister—I never met pluck like mother's in all my life—but I said "No This is a mountaineering inn, and it suits me down to the ground—or if you prefer it, up to the sky You shall sit in the veranda by the telescope and I'll prance about among the peaks for a bit"

"Don t have accidents," she said

"Can't promise that, little mother," I said, "but I ll always remember I m your only son"

So I pranced

I need hardly say that in a couple of days I was at loggerheads with all the mountaineers in that inn They

couldn't stand me They didn't like my neck with its strong, fine Adam's apple—being mostly men with their heads *jammed* on—and they didn't like the way I bore myself and lifted my aviator's nose to the peaks They didn't like my being a vegetarian and the way I evidently enjoyed it, and they didn't like the touch of colour orange and green, in my rough serge suit They were all of the dingy school—the sort of men I call gentle manly owls—shy, correct minded creatures, mostly from Oxford, and as solemn over their climbing as a cat frying eggs Sage they were, great headnodders, and "I wouldn't venture to do a thing like that"-ers They always did what the books and guides advised, and they classed themselves by their seasons, one was in his ninth season, and another in his tenth, and so on I was a novice and had to sit with my mouth open for bits of humble pie

My style that! Rather!

I would sit in the smoking room sucking away at a

[illegible]

their natural reticence altogether in their efforts to show how much they didn't like me

"You chaps take these blessed mountains too seriously," I said "They're larks, and you've got to lark with them"

They just slued their eyes round at me

"I don't find the solemn joy in fussing you do The old style mountaineers went up with alpenstocks and ladders and light hearts That's my idea of mountaineering"

"It isn't ours," said one red boiled hero of the peaks all blisters and peeling skin, and he said it with an air of crushing me

"It's the right idea," I said serenely, and puffed at my herb tobacco

"When you've had a bit of experience you'll know

better," said another, an oldish young man with a small grey beard

"Experience never taught *me* anything," I said

"Apparently not," said someone, and left me one down and me to play I kept perfectly tranquil

"I mean to do the Mörderberg before I go down," I said quietly, and produced a sensation

"*When are you going down?*"

"Week or so," I answered, unperturbed

"It's not the climb a man ought to attempt in his first year," said the peeling gentleman

"*You* particularly ought not to try it," said another

"No guide will go with you"

"Foolhardy idea"

"Mere brag"

"Like to see him do it"

I just let them boil for a bit and when they were back to the simmer I dropped in, pensively, with, "Very likely I'll take that little mother of mine She's small, bless her, but she's as hard as nails"

But they saw they were being drawn by my ill concealed smile, and this time they contented themselves with a few grunts and grunt like remarks, and then broke up into little conversations in undertones that pointedly excluded me It had the effect of hardening my purpose I'm a stiff man when I'm put on my mettle, and I determined that the little mother *should* go up the Mörderberg, where half these solemn experts hadn't been even if I had to be killed or orphaned in the attempt So I spoke to her about it the next day She was in a deck chair on the veranda, wrapped up in rugs and looking at the peaks

"Comfy?" I said

"*Very,*" *she said*

"Getting rested?"

"It's so nice"

I strolled to the rail of the veranda "S e that peak there, mummy?"

She nodded happily, with eyes half shut .

"That s the Mörderberg You and me have got to be up there the day after to-morrow"

Her eyes opened a bit "Wouldn't it be rather a climb, dearest?" she said

"I'll manage that all right," I said, and she smiled consentingly and closed her eyes

"So long as you manage it," she said

I went down the valley that afternoon to Daxdam to get gear and guides and porters, and I spent the next day in glacier and rock practice above the hotel That didn't add to my popularity I made two little slips One took me down a crevasse—I've an extra ordinary knack of going down crevasses—and a party of three which was starting for the Kinderspitz spent an hour and a half fishing me out, and the other led to my dropping my ice axe on a little string of people going for the Humpi glacier It didn't go within thirty inches of anyone, but you might have thought from the row they made that I had knocked out the collective brains of the party Quite frightful language they used, and three ladies with them, too!

The next day there was something very like an organised attempt to prevent our start They brought out the landlord they remonstrated with mother, they did their best to blacken the character of my two guides The landlord's brother had a first class row with them

"Two years ago," he said, "they lost their Herr!"

"No particular reason," I said, "why you shouldn't keep yours on, is it?"

That settled him He wasn't up to a polyglot pun, and it stuck in his mind like a fishbone in the throat

Then the peeling gentleman came along and tried to overhaul our equipment "Have you got th s?" it was and "Have you got that?"

"Two things," I said looking at his nose pretty hard we haven't forgotten One's blue veils and the other vaseline"

I've still a bright little memory of the start There was the pass a couple of hundred feet or so below the hotel, and the hotel—all name and windows—standing out in a great, desolate, rocky place against lumpy masses of streaky green rock, flecked here and there with patches of snow and dark shelves of rhododendron, and rising perhaps a thousand feet towards the western spur of the massif Our path ran before us, meandering among the boulders down to stepping stones over a rivulet, and then upward on the other side of the stream towards the Magenruhe glacier where we had to go up the rocks to the left and then across the icefall to shelves on the precipitous face on the west side It was dawn, the sun had still to rise, and everything looked very cold and blue and vast about us Everyone in the hotel had turned out to bear a hand in the row—some of the *deshabilles were disgraceful—and now they stood in a* silent group watching us recede The last word I caught was, "They'll have to come back"

"We'll come back all right," I answered "Never fear"

And so we went our way, cool and deliberate, over the stream and up and up towards the steep snowfields and icy shoulder of the Mörderberg I remember that we went in absolute silence for a time, and then how suddenly the landscape gladdened with sunrise, and in an instant, as if speech had thawed, all our tongues were babbling

[illegible]

showed my hand a little, and unslung a stout twine hammock for the mater We put her in this with a rug round her, and sewed her in with a few stitches, then we roped up in line, with me last but one and a guide front *and rear, and mummy in the middle carried by two of* the porters I stuck my alpenstock through two holes I

had made in the shoulders of my jacket under my rucksac, T shape to my body, so that when I went down a crevasse, as I did ever and again, I just stuck in its jaws and came up easy as the rope grew taut And so, except for one or two bumps that made the mater chuckle, we got over without misadventure

Then came the rock climb on the other side, requiring much judgment. We had to get from ledge to ledge as opportunity offered, and here the little mother was a perfect godsend We unpacked her after we had slung her over the big fissure—I forget what you call it—that always comes between glacier and rock—and whenever we came to a bit of ledge within eight feet of the one we were working along, the two guides took her and slung her up, she being so light, and then she was able to give a foot for the next man to hold by and hoist himself She said we were all pulling her leg, and that made her and me laugh so much that the whole party had to wait for us

It was pretty tiring altogether doing that bit of the climb—two hours we had of it before we got to the loose masses of rock on the top of the arete "It's worse going down," said the elder guide

I looked back for the first time, and I confess it did make me feel a bit giddy There was the glacier looking quite petty, and with a black gash between itself and the rocks

For a time it was pretty fair going up the rocky edge of the arete, and nothing happened of any importance, except that one of the porters took to grousing *because* he was hit on the shin by a stone I dislodged "Fortunes of war," I said, but he didn't seem to see it, and when I just missed him with a second he broke out into a long, whining discourse in what I suppose *he* thought was German—*I* couldn't make head or tail of it

"He says you might have killed him," said the little mother

"They say," I quoted, "What say they? *Let* them say"

I was for stopping and filling him up with a feed, but the elder guide wouldn't have it We had already lost time, he said, and the traverse round the other face of the mountain would be more and more subject to avalanches as the sun got up So we went on As we went round the corner to the other face I turned towards the hotel—it was the meanest little oblong spot by now —and made a derisive gesture or so for the benefit of anyone at the telescope

We did get one rock avalanche that reduced the hind most guide to audible prayer, but nothing hit us except a few bits of snow The rest of the fall was a couple of yards and more out from us We were on rock just then and overhang, before and afterwards we were edging along steps in an ice slope cut by the foremost guide, and touched up by the porters The avalanche [illegible]

[illegible]

am

"All right?" said the guide

"Toned up," I answered

"I suppose it *is* safe, dear?" asked the little mother

"Safe as Trafalgar Square," I said "Hop along, mummykins"

Which she did with remarkable agility

The traverse took us on to old snow at last, and here we could rest for lunch—and pretty glad we were both of lunch and rest But here the trouble with the guides and porters thickened They were already a little ruffled about my animating way with loose rocks, and now they kicked up a tremendous shindy because instead of the customary brandy we had brought non alcoholic ginger cordial Would they even try it? Not a bit of it! It was a queer little dispute, high up in that rarefied air

about food values and the advantages of making sandwiches with nuttar They were an odd lot of men, invincibly set upon a vitiated and vitiating dietary They wanted meat, they wanted alcohol, they wanted narcotics to smoke You might have thought that men like these living in almost direct contact with Nature, would have liked "Nature" foods, such as plasmon, protose, plobose digestine, and so forth Not them! They just craved for corruption When I spoke of drinking pure water one of the porters spat in a marked, symbolic manner over the precipice From that point onward discontent prevailed

We started again about half past eleven, after a vain attempt on the part of the head guide to induce us to turn back We had now come to what is generally the most difficult part of the Mörderberg ascent, the edge that leads up to the snowfield below the crest But here we came suddenly into a draught of warm air blowing from the south west, and everything the guide said was unusual Usually the edge is a sheet of ice over rock To day it was wet and soft, and one could kick steps in it and get one's toes into rock with the utmost ease

"This is where Herr Tomlinson's party fell," said one of the porters after we'd committed ourselves to the edge for ten minutes or so

"Some people could fall out of a four post bed," I said

"It'll freeze hard again before we come back," said the second guide, "and us with nothing but verdammt ginger inside of us"

"You keep your rope taut," said I

A friendly ledge came to the help of mother in the nick of time, just as she was beginning to tire, and we sewed her up all but the feet in her hammock again and roped her carefully She bumped a bit, and at times she was just hanging over immensity and rotating slowly with everybody else holding like grim death

"My dear," she said, the first time this happened, "is it *right* for me to be doing this?"

"Quite right," I said, "but if you can get a foothold *presently* again—it's rather better style"

"You're sure there's no danger, dear?"

"Not a scrap"

"And I don't fatigue you?"

"You're a stimulant"

"The view," she said, "is certainly becoming very beautiful"

But presently the view blotted itself out, and we were in clouds and a thin drift of almost thawing snowflakes

We reached the upper snowfield about half past one, and the snow was extraordinarily soft The elder guide went in up to his armpits

"*Frog it,*" *I said and spread myself out flat, in a sort* of swimming attitude So we bored our way up to the crest and along it We went in little spurts and then stopped for breath, and we dragged the little mother after us in her hammock bag Sometimes the snow was so good we fairly skimmed the surface, sometimes it was so rotten we plunged right into it and splashed about I went too near the snow cornice once and it broke under me, but the rope saved me and we reached the summit about three o'clock without further misadventure. The summit was just bare rock with the usual cairn and pole Nothing to make a fuss about The drift of snow and cloudwisp had passed, the sun was blazing hot overhead, and we seemed to be surveying all Switzerland The Magenruhe Hotel was at our toes, hidden, so to speak, by our chins We squatted about the cairn, and the guides and porters were reduced to ginger and vegetarian ham sandwiches I cut and scratched an inscription, saying I had climbed on simple food, and claiming a record

Seen from the summit the snowfields on the north east side of the mountain looked extremely attractive, and I asked the head guide why that way up wasn't used.

He said something in his peculiar German about precipices

So far our ascent had been a fairly correct ascent in rather slow time It was in the descent that that strain in me of almost unpremeditated originality had play I wouldn't have the rope returning across the upper snow field, because mother's feet and hands were cold, and I wanted her to jump about a bit And before I could do anything to prevent it she had slipped, tried to get up by rolling over *down* the slope instead of up, as she ought to have done, and was leading the way, rolling over and over and over, down towards the guide's blessed precipices above the lower snowfield

I didn't lose an instant in flinging myself after her, axe up, in glissading attitude I'm not clear what I meant to do, but I fancy the idea was to get in front of her and put on the brake I did not succeed, anyhow In twenty seconds I had slipped, and was sitting down and going down out of my own control altogether

Now, most great discoveries are the result of accident, and I maintain that in that instant mother and I discovered two distinct and novel ways of coming down a mountain

It is necessary that there should be first a snow slope above with a layer of softish, rotten snow on the top of ice, then a precipice, with a snow covered talus sloping steeply at first and then less steeply, then more snow slopes and precipices according to taste, ending in a snowfield or a not too greatly fissured glacier, or a reasonable, not too rocky slope Then it all becomes as easy as chuting the chutes

Mother hit on the sideways method She rolled With the snow in the adhesive state it had got into she had made the jolliest little snowball of herself in half a minute, and the nucleus of as clean and abundant a snow avalanche as anyone could wish There was plenty of snow going in front of her, and that's the very essence of both our methods You must fall on your snow not

your snow on you, or it smashes you And you mustn't mix yourself up with loose stones

I, on the other hand, went down feet first and rather like a snow plough, slower than she did and if perhaps, with less charm, with more dignity Also I saw more. But it was certainly a tremendous rush And I gave a sort of gulp when mummy bumped over the edge into the empty air and vanished

It was like a toboggan ride gone mad down the slope until I took off from the edge of the precipice, and then it was like a dream

I'd always thought falling must be horrible It wasn't in the slightest degree I might have hung with my clouds and lumps of snow about me for weeks, so great was my serenity I had an impression then that I was as good as killed—and that it didn't matter I wasn't afraid —that's nothing!—but I wasn't a bit uncomfortable Whack! We'd hit something, and I expected to be flying to bits right and left But we'd only got on to the snow slope below, at so steep an angle that it was merely breaking the fall Down we went again I didn't see much of the view after that because the snow was all round and over my head, but I kept feet foremost and in a kind of sitting posture, and then I slowed and then I quickened again and bumped rather, and then harder and bumped and then bumped again and came to rest This time I was altogether buried in snow, and twisted sideways with a lot of heavy snow on my right shoulder

I sat for a bit enjoying the stillness—and then I wondered what had become of mother, and set myself to get out of the snow about me It wasn't so easy as [illegible]

masses of snow quite close to the upper part of the Magenruhe glacier And far away, right up the glacier and near the other side, was a little thing like a black-

beetle struggling in the heart of an immense split ball of snow

I put my hands to my mouth and let out with my version of the yodel, and presently I saw her waving her hand

It took me nearly twenty minutes to get to her I knew my weakness, and I was very careful of every crevasse I came near When I got up to her her face was anxious

"What have you done with the guides?" she asked

"They've got too much to carry," I said "They're coming down another way Did you like it?"

"Not very much, dear," she said, "but I dare say I *shall* get used to these things Which way do we go now?"

I decided we'd find a snow bridge across the berg schrund—that's the word I forgot just now—and so get on to the rocks on the east side of the glacier, and after that we had uneventful going right down to the hotel

Our return evoked such a strain of hostility and envy as I have never met before or since First they tried to make out we'd never been to the top at all, but mother's little proud voice settled that sort of insult And, besides there was the evidence of the guides and porters following us down When they asked about the guides "They're following *your* methods" I said, "and I suppose they'll get back here to-morrow morning some when"

That didn't please them

I claimed a record They said my methods were illegitimate

"If I see fit," I said, "to use an avalanche to get back by, what's that to you? You tell me me and mother can't do the confounded mountain anyhow, and when we do you want to invent a lot of rules to disqualify us You'll say next one mustn't glissade I've made a record,

and you know I've made a record and you're about as sour as you can be. The fact of it is you chaps don't *know your own silly business.* Here's a good quick way of coming down a mountain and you ought to know about it——"

"The chance that both of you are not killed was one in a thousand."

"Nonsense! *It's the proper way to come down for* anyone who hasn't a hide bound mind. You chaps ought to practise falling great heights in snow. It's perfectly easy and perfectly safe, if only you know how to set about it."

"Look here, young man," said the oldish young man with the little grey beard, "you don't seem to understand that you and that lady have been saved by a kind of miracle——"

"Theory!" I interrupted. "I'm surprised you fellows ever come to Switzerland. If I were your kind I'd just invent theoretical mountains and play for points. However, you're tired, little mummy. It's time you had some nice warm soup and tucked yourself up in bed. I shan't let you get up for six and thirty hours."

But it's queer how people detest a little originality.

THE STORY OF THE LAST TRUMP

THE STORY OF THE LAST TRUMP

§ 1

THE story of the Last Trump begins in Heaven and it ends in all sorts of places round about the world

Heaven, you must know, is a kindly place, and the blessed ones do not go on for ever singing Alleluia, whatever you may have been told For they too are finite creatures, and must be fed with their eternity in little bits, as one feeds a chick or a child So that there are mornings and changes and freshness, there is time to *condition their lives* And the children are still children, gravely eager about their playing and ready always for new things, just children they are, but blessèd as you see them in the pictures beneath the careless feet of the Lord God And one of these blessèd children routing about in an attic—for Heaven is, of course, full of the most heavenly attics, seeing that it has children—came upon a number of instruments stored away, and laid its little chubby hands upon them

Now indeed I cannot tell what these instruments were for to do so would be to invade mysteries But one I may tell of, and that was a great brazen

trumpet which the Lord God had made when He made the world—for the Lord God finishes all His jobs—to blow when the time for our Judgement came round And He had made it and left it, there it was, and every thing was settled exactly as the Doctrine of Predestina tion declares And this blessèd child conceived one of those unaccountable passions of childhood for its smooth ness and brassiness, and he played with it and tried to blow it, and trailed it about with him out of the attic into the gay and golden streets, and, after many fitful wanderings, to those celestial battlements of crystal of which you have doubtless read And there the blessèd child fell to counting the stars, and forgot all about the Trumpet beside him until a flourish of his elbow sent it over

Down fell the trump, spinning as it fell, and for a day or so, which seemed but moments in heaven, the blessèd child watched its fall until it was a glittering little speck of brightness

When it looked a second time the trump was gone

I do not know what happened to that child when at last it was time for Judgement Day and that shining trumpet was missed I know that Judgement Day is long overpassed because of the wickedness of the world I think perhaps it was in A D 1000 when the expected Day should have dawned that never came, but no other heavenly particulars do I know at all, because now my scene changes to the narrow ways of this Earth

And the Prologue in Heaven ends

§ 2

And now the scene is a dingy little shop in Cale donian Market, where things of an incredible worthless ness lie in wait for such as seek after an impossible cheapness In the window, as though it had always been there and never anywhere else, lies a long, battered

discoloured trumpet of brass that no prospective pur chaser has ever been able to sound In it r ice shelter and dust and fluff have gathered after the fash n of this world The keeper of the shop is a very old man and he bought the shop long ago, but already this trumpet was there, he has no idea whence it came nor its country or origin, nor anything about it But once in a moment of enterprise that led to nothing he decided to call it an Ancient Ceremonial Shawm though he ought to have known that whatever a shawm may be the last thing it was likely to be is a trumpet seeing that they are always mentioned together And above it hung concertinas and melodeons and cornets and tin whistles

argu-d

They argued about these instruments in stock and how you made these instruments sound because they were fond of argument, and one asserted and the other denied that he could make every instrument in the place sound a note And the argument rose high, and led to a bet

"Supposing of course, that the instrument is in order" said Hoskin who was betting he could

"That's understood" said Briggs

And then they called as witnesses certain other young and black and greasy men in the same employment, and

always very unattractive window And after great difficulty they arranged that for the sum of one shilling, paid in advance, Hoskin should have a try at every instrument in the shop that Briggs chose to indicate

And the trial began

The third instrument that was pitched upon by Briggs for the trial was the strange trumpet that lay at the bottom of the window, the trumpet that you, who have read the Introduction, know was the trumpet for the Last Trump And Hoskin tried and tried again, and then, blowing desperately, hurt his ears But he could get no sound from the trumpet Then he examined the trumpet more carefully and discovered the mice and fluff and other things in it, and demanded that it should be cleaned, and the old dealer, nothing loth, knowing they were used to automobile horns and such-like instruments, agreed to let them clean it on condition that they left it shiney So the young men, after making a suitable deposit (which, as you shall hear, was presently confiscated) went off with the trumpet, proposing to clean it next day at the works and polish it with the peculiarly excellent brass polish employed upon the honk honk horns of the firm And this they did, and Hoskin tried again

But he tried in vain Whereupon there arose a great argument about the trumpet, whether it was in order or not, whether it was possible for any one to sound it For if not, then clearly it was outside the condition of the bet

Others among the young men tried it, including two who played wind instruments in a band and were musically knowing men After their own failure they were strongly on the side of Hoskin and strongly against Briggs, and most of the other young men were of the same opinion

"Not a bit of it," said Briggs, who was a man of resource "I'll show you that it can be sounded"

And taking the instrument in his hand he went towards a peculiarly powerful foot blow pipe that stood at the far end of the toolshed "Good old Briggs!" said one of the other young men, and opinion veered about

Briggs removed the blow pipe from its bellows and

tube, and then adjusted the tube very carefully to the mouthpiece of the trumpet Then with great delibera tion he produced a piece of bees waxed string from a number of other strange and filthy contents in his pocket and tied the tube to the mouthpiece And then he began to work the treadle of the bellows

"Good old Briggs!" said the one who had previously admired him

And then something incomprehensible happened

It was a flash Whatever else it was, it was a flash And a sound that seemed to coincide exactly with the flash

Afterwards the young men agreed to it that the trumpet blew to bits It blew to bits and vanished, and they were all flung upon their faces—not backward, be it noted, but on their faces—and Briggs was stunned and scared The toolshed windows were broken and the various apparatus and cars around were much displaced, and no *traces of the trumpet were ever dis covered*

That last particular puzzled and perplexed poor Briggs very much It puzzled and perplexed him the more because he had had an impression so extraordinary, so incredible, that he was never able to describe it to any other living person But his impression was this that the flash that came with the sound came, not from the trumpet but to it, that it smote down to it and took it, and that its shape was in the exact likeness of a hand and arm of fire

§ 3

And that was not all that was not the only strange thing about the disappearance of that battered trumpet There was something else, even more difficult to describe, an effect as though for one instant something opened

The young men who worked with Hoskin and Briggs

had that clearness of mind which comes of dealing with machinery, and they all felt this indescribable something else, as if for an instant the world wasn't the world, but something lit and wonderful, larger——

This is what one of them said of it

"I felt," he said, "just for a minute—as though I was blown to Kingdom Come"

"It is just how it took me," said another "'Lord,' I says, 'here's Judgement Day!' and then there I was sprawling among the files "

But none of the others felt that they could say any thing more definite than that

§ 4

Moreover, there was a storm All over the world there was a storm that puzzled meteorology, a moment's gale that left the atmosphere in a state of wild swaygog rains, tornadoes, depressions, irregularities for weeks News came of it from all the quarters of the earth

All over China, for example, that land of cherished graves, there was a duststorm, dust leaped into the air A kind of earthquake shook Europe—an earthquake that seemed to have at heart the peculiar interests of Mr Algernon Ashton, everywhere it cracked mausoleums and shivered the pavements of cathedrals swished the flower beds of cemeteries, and tossed tombstones aside A crematorium in Texas blew up The sea was greatly agitated, and the beautiful harbour of Sydney, in Australia, was seen to be littered with sharks floating upside down in manifest distress

And all about the world a sound was heard like the sound of a trumpet instantly cut short.



But this much is only the superficial dressing of the story The reality is something different It is this that in an instant, and for an instant the dead lived, and all that are alive in the world did for a moment see the Lord God and all His powers, His hosts of angels,

a glimpse it was that came to Devindranath Tagore upon the burning ghat at Benares But this was not an individual but a world experience, the flash came to every one Not always was it quite the same, and thereby the doubter found his denials, when presently a sort of discussion broke out in the obscurer Press For this one testified that it seemed that "One stood very near to me," and another saw "all the hosts of heaven flame up towards the Throne"

And there were others who had a vision of brooding watchers, and others who imagined great sentinels before a veiled figure, and some one who felt nothing more divine than a sensation of happiness and freedom such as one gets from a sudden burst of sunshine in the

And people were left with the question of what they had seen, and just how much it mattered

The curtain had been snatched back for an instant; it had fallen again, but his mind had taken a photographic impression of everything that he had seen—the grave presences, the hierarchy, the effulgence, the vast concourse, the terrible, gentle eyes He felt it, as though the vision still continued, behind the bookcases, behind the pictured wall and the curtained window *even now there was judgement!*

For quite a long time he sat, incapable of more than apprehending this supreme realisation His hands were held out limply upon the desk before him And then very slowly his staring eyes came back to immediate things, and fell upon the scattered manuscript on which he had been engaged He read an unfinished sentence and slowly recovered its intention As he did so a picture of his congregation came to him as he saw it from the pulpit during his evening sermon, as he had intended to see it on the Sunday evening that was at hand, with Lady Rupert in her sitting and Lady Blex in hers and Mrs Munbridge, the rich and in her Jewish

[illegible] running them close

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and others and others, ranks and ranks of people and the galleries on either side packed with worshippers of a less dominant class, and the great organ and his magnificent choir waiting to support him and supplement him, and the great altar to the left of him, and the beautiful new Lady Chapel, done by Roger Fry and Wyndham Lewis and all the latest people in Art, to the right He thought of the listening multitude, seen through the haze of the thousand electric candles, and how he had planned the paragraphs of his discourse so that the notes of his beautiful voice should float slowly down, like golden leaves in autumn, into the smooth tarn of their silence, word by word, phrase by phrase until he came to—

"Now to God the Father, God the Son——"

And all the time he knew that Lady Blex would watch his face and Mrs Munbridge, leaning those graceful shoulders of hers a little forward, would watch his face

Many people would watch his face

All sorts of people would come to Mr Parchester's services at times Once it was said Mr Balfour had come Just to hear him After his sermons, the strangest people would come and make confessions in the beautifully furnished reception room beyond the vestry All sorts of people Once or twice he had asked people to come and listen to him, and one of them had been a very beautiful woman And often he had dreamt of the people who might come prominent people, influential people, remarkable people But never before had it occurred to Mr Parchester that, a little hidden from the rest of the congregation, behind the thin veil of this material world, there was another auditorium And that God also, God also, watched his face

And watched him through and through

Terror seized upon Mr Parchester

He stood up, as though Divinity had come into the room before him He was trembling He felt smitten and about to be smitten

He perceived that it was hopeless to try and hide what he had written, what he had thought, the unclean egotism he had become

"I did not know," he said at last

The click of the door behind him warned him that he was not alone He turned and saw Miss Skelton, his typist, for it was her time to come for his manuscript and copy it out in the specially legible type he used For a moment he stared at her strangely

She looked at him with those deep, adoring eyes of hers "Am I too soon, sir?" she asked in her slow, unhappy voice, and seemed prepared for a noiseless departure

He did not answer immediately Then he said Miss Skelton, the Judgement of God is close at hand!'

And seeing she stood perplexed, he said—

"Miss Skelton, how can you expect me to go on acting and mouthing this Tosh when the Sword of Truth hangs over us?"

Something in her face made him ask a question.

'Did *you* see anything?" he asked

"I thought it was because I was rubbing my eyes"

"Then indeed there is a God! And he is watching s now And all this about us, this sinful room this foolish costume, this preposterous life of blasphemous pretension——!"

He stopped short, with a kind of horror on his face. With a hopeless gesture he rushed by her He appeared wild eyed upon the landing before his man servant who was carrying a scuttle of coal upstairs

"Brompton," he said, "what are you doing?"

"Coal, sir"

"Put it down, man!" he said "Are you not an immortal soul? God is here! As close as my hand! Repent! Turn to Him! The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

§9

Now if you are a policeman perplexed by a sudden and naccountable collision between a taxicab and an electric standard, complicated by a blinding flash and a sound like an abbreviated trump from an automobile horn

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duty of a policeman to be respectful to Gentlemen but you say to him, "Sorry I can't attend to that now sir One thing at a time I've got this little accident to see to" And if he persists in dancing round the gather

ing crowd and coming at you again, you say: "I'm afraid I must ask you just to get away from here, sir You aren t being a 'elp, sir" And if, on the other hand you are a well trained clerical gentleman, wh knows his way ab t in the world, you do not g on pestering a policen an on duty after he has said that, even although you think God is looking at you and Judgement is close at hand You turn away and go on, a little damped looking for some one else more likely to pay attention to your tremendous tidings

And so it happened to the Reverend Mr Parchester

He experienced a curious little recession of confidence He went on past quite a n nber of people without saying anything further and the next person he accosted was a flower woman sitting by her basket at the corner of Chexington Square She was unable to stop him at once when he began to talk to her because she was tying up a big bundle of white chrysanthemums and had an end of string behind her teeth And her daughter who stood beside her was the sort of girl who wouldn't say 'Bo to a goose

"Do you know my good woman," said Mr Parchester "that while we poor creatures of earth go about our poor b isiness here, while we sin and blunder and follow every sort of base end close to us, above us, around us watching us, judging us, are God and His holy angels? I have had a vision and I am not the only one I have *seen* We are *in* the Kingdom of Heaven now and here and Judgement is all about us now! Have you seen nothing? No light? No sound? No warning?"

By this time the old flower seller had finished her bunch of flowers and could speak "I saw it," she said "And Mary—she saw it"

"Well?" said Mr Parchester

"But Lord! It don't *mean* nothing!" said the old flower-seller

§ 10

At that a kind of chill fell upon Mr Parchester He went on across Chexington Square by his own inertia

He was still about as sure that he had seen God as he had been in his study, but now he was no longer sure that the world would believe that he had He felt perhaps that this idea of rushing out to tell people was precipitate and inadvisable After all, a priest in the Church of England is only one unit in a great machine and in a world wide spiritual crisis it should be the task of that great machine to act as one resolute body This isolated crying aloud in the street was unworthy of a consecrated priest It was a dissenting kind of thing to do A vulgar individualistic screaming He thought suddenly that he would go and tell his Bishop the great Bishop Wampach He called a taxicab, and within half an hour he was in the presence of his commanding officer It was an extraordinarily difficult and painful interview

You see, Mr Parchester believed The Bishop impressed him as being quite angrily resolved not to believe And for the first time in his career Mr Parchester realised just how much jealous hostility a beautiful, fluent, and popular preacher may arouse in the minds of the hierarchy It wasn't, he felt, a conversation It was like flinging oneself into the paddock of a bull that has long been anxious to gore one

"Inevitably," said the Bishop, "this theatricalism this star turn business, with its extreme spiritual excitements, its exaggerated soul crisis and all the rest of it, leads to such a breakdown as afflicts you Inevitably You were at least wise to come to me I can see you are only in the beginning of your trouble, that already in your mind fresh hallucinations are gathering to overwhelm you, voices, special charges and missions, strange

revelations I wish I had the power to suspend you right away, to send you into retreat "

Mr Parchester made a violent effort to control himself "But I tell you," he said, "that I saw God! He added, as if to reassure himself "More plainly, more certainly, than I see you"

"Of course,' said the Bishop, "this is how strange new sects come into existence, this is how false prophets spring out of the bosom of the Church Loose minded excitable men of your stamp——"

Mr Parchester to his own astonishment, burst into tears "But I tell you," he wept, ' He is here I have seen I know"

"Don't talk such nonsense!' said the Bishop "There is no one here but you and I!"

Mr Parchester expostulated "But," he protested, "He is omnipresent

The Bishop controlled an expression of impatience "It is characteristic of your condition," he said, "that you are unable to distinguish between a matter of fact and a spiritual truth Now listen to me If you value your sanity and public decency and the discipline of the Church, go right home from here and go to bed Send for Broadhays, who will prescribe a safe sedative And read something calming and graceful and purifying For my own part, I should be disposed to recommend the 'Life of Saint Francis of Assisi' "

§ 11

Unhappily Mr Parchester did not go home He went out from the Bishop's residence stunned and amazed, and suddenly upon his desolation came the thought of Mrs Munbridge

She would understand

He was shown up to her own little sitting room She had already gone up to her room to dress, but when she heard that he had called, and wanted very greatly

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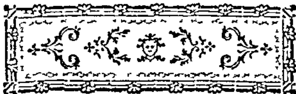
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And as it was with Mr Parchester and Brompton and Mrs Munbridge, and the taxi-driver and the policeman and the little old lady and the automobile mechanics and Mr Parchester's secretary and the Bishop, so it was with all the rest of the world If a thing is sufficiently strange and great no one will perceive it Men will go on in their own ways though one rose from the dead to tell them that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, though the Kingdom itself and all its glory became visible, blinding their eyes They and their ways are one Men will go on in their ways as rabbits will go on feeding in their hutches within a hundred yards of a battery of artillery For rabbits are rabbits, and made to eat and breed, and men are human beings and creatures of habit and custom and prejudice, and what has made them, what will judge them, what will destroy them—they may turn their eyes to it at times as the rabbits will glance at the concussion of the guns, but it will never draw them away from eating their lettuce and sniffing after their does . . .

THE GRISLY FOLK



THE GRISLY FOLK

"CAN these bones live?"

Could anything be more dead, more mute and inexpressive to the inexpert eye than the ochreous fragments of bone and the fractured lumps of flint that constitute the first traces of something human in the world? We see them in the museum cases, sorted out in accordance with principles we do not understand, labelled with strange names Chellean, Mousterian, Solutrian and the like, taken mostly from the places Chelles, La Moustier, Solutre, and so forth where the first specimens were found Most of us stare through the glass at them, wonder vaguely for a moment at that half savage, half animal past of our race, and pass on "Primitive man," we say "Flint implements The mammoth used to chase him" Few of us realise yet how much the subtle indefatigable cross-examination of the scientific worker has been extracting from the evidence of these rusty and obstinate witnesses during the last few years

One of the most startling results of this recent work is the gradual realisation that great quantities of these flint implements and some of the earlier fragments of bone that used to be ascribed to humanity are the vestiges of creatures, very manlike in many respects, but

not, strictly speaking, belonging to the human species Scientific men call these vanished races man (*Homo*), just as they call lions and tigers cats (*Felis*), but there are the soundest reasons for believing that these earlier so called men were not of our blood, not our ancestors, but a strange and vanished animal, like us, akin to us but different from us, as the mammoth was like, and akin to, and yet different from, the elephant Flint and bone implements are found in deposits of very considerable antiquity, some in our museums may be a million years old or more, but the traces of really human creatures, mentally and anatomically like ourselves, do not go back much earlier than twenty or thirty thousand years ago True men appeared in Europe then, and we do not know whence they came These other tool using, fire making animals, the things that were like men and yet were not men, passed away before the faces of the true men

Scientific authorities already distinguish four species of these pseudo men, and it is probable that we shall learn from time to time of other species One strange breed made the implements called Chellean These are chiefly sole shaped blades of stone found in deposits of perhaps 300,000 or 400,000 years ago Chellean implements are to be seen in any great museum They are huge implements, *four or five times as big as those made by any known race of true men* and they are not ill made Certainly some creature with an intelligent brain made them Big clumsy hands must have gripped and used these rocky chunks But so far only one small fragment of a skeleton of this age has been found, a very massive chinless lower jawbone, with teeth rather more specialised than those of men to-day We can only guess what strange foreshadowing of the human form once ate with that jaw, and struck at its enemies with those big but not unhandy flint blades It may have been a tremendous fellow, probably much bigger in the body than a man It may have been able to take bears by the scruff

and the sabre toothed lion by the throat We do not know We have just these great stone bla les and that bit of a massive jaw and—the liberty to wonder

Most fascinating riddle of all these riddles of the ages of ice and hardship, before the coming of the true men, is the riddle of the Mousterian men, because they were perhaps still living in the world when the true men came wandering into Europe They lived much later than those unknown Chellean giants They lived thirty or forty thousand years ago—a yesterday compared with the Chellean time These Mousterians are also called Neandertalers Until quite recently it was supposed that they were true men like ourselves But now we beg n to realise that they were different, so different that it is impossible that they can be very close relations of ours They walked or shambled along with a peculiar slouch they could not turn their heads up to the sky, and their teeth were very d fferent from those of true men One oddity about them is that in one or two points they were less like apes than we are The dog tooth, the third tooth from the mid lle, which is so big in the gorilla and which in man is pointed and still quite d stinct from the other teeth, is not distinct at all in the Neandertaler He had a very even row of teeth, and his cheek teeth also were very unlike ours, and less like the apes' than ours He had more face and less brow than true men, but that is not because he had a lesser brain his brain was as big as a modern man's but it was different, bigger behind and smaller in front, so that probably he thought and behaved differently from us Perhaps he had a better memory and less reasoning power than real men, or perhaps he had more nervous energy and less intelligence He had no chin, and the way his jawbones come together below make it very doubtful if he could have used any such sounds in speech as we employ Probably he did not talk at all He could not hold a pin between his finger and thumb The more we learn about this beast man the stranger he becomes

to us and the less like the Australoid savage he was once supposed to be

And as we realise the want of any close relationship between this ugly, strong, ungainly, manlike animal and mankind, the less likely it becomes that he had a naked skin and hair like ours and the more probable that he was different, and perhaps bristly or hairy in some queer inhuman fashion like the hairy elephant and the woolly rhinoceros who were his contemporaries Like them he lived in a bleak land on the edge of the snows and glaciers [illegible] Hairy or grisly [illegible] r dges and no [illegible] run ning like [illegible] l ke a man, with his head up, he must have been a fearsome creature for our forefathers to come upon

Almost certainly they met, these grisly men and the true men The true man must have come into the habitat of the Neandertaler, and the two must have met and fought Some day we may come upon the evidences of this warfare

Western Europe, which is the only part of the world that has yet been searched with any thoroughness for the remains of early men, was slowly growing warmer age by age, the glaciers that had once covered half the con tinent were receding, and wide stretches of summer pasture and thin woods of pine and birch were spreading slowly over the once icy land South Europe then was like northern Labrador to-day A few hardy beasts held out amidst the snows, the bears hibernated With the spring grass and foliage came great herds of reindeer, wild horses, mammoth, elephant, and rhinoceros drifting northward from the slopes of the great warm valley that is now filled up with water—the Mediterranean Sea It was in those days before the ocean waters broke into the Mediterranean that the swallows and a multitude of other birds acquired the habit of coming north, a habit that nowadays impels them to brave the passage of the

perilous seas that flow over and hide the lost secrets of the ancient Mediterranean valleys The grisly men rejoiced at the return of life came out of the caves in which they had lurked during the winter, and took their toll of the beasts

These grisly men must have been almost solitary creatures

The winter food was too scanty for communities A male may have gone with a female or so, perhaps they parted in the winter and came together in the summer, when his sons grew big enough to annoy him, the grisly man killed them or drove them off If he killed them he may have eaten them If they escaped him they may have returned to kill him The grisly folk may have had long unreasoning memories and very set purposes

The true men came into Europe, we know not whence, out of the South When they appeared in Europe their hands were as clever as ours, they could draw pictures we still admire, they could paint and carve the implements they made were smaller than the Mousterian ones far smaller than the Chellean, but better made and more various They wore no clothes worth speaking of, but they painted themselves and probably they talked And they came in little bands They were already more social than the Neandertaler they had laws and self restraints, their minds had travelled a long way along that path of adaptation and self suppression which has led to the intricate mind of man to day with its concealed wishes, its confusions, and laughter and the fantasies and reveries and dreams They were already held together, these men, and kept in order by the strange limitations of tabu

They were still savages, very prone to violence and convulsive in their lusts and desires, but to the best of their poor ability they obeyed laws and customs already immemorably ancient, and they feared the penalties of wrong doing We can understand something of what was going on in their minds, those of us who can re

member the fears, desires, fancies and superstitions of our childhood Their moral struggles were ours—i cruder forms They were our kind But the grisly folk we cannot begin to understand We cannot conceive in our different minds the strange ideas that chased one another through those queerly shaped brains As well might we try to dream and feel as a gorilla dreams and feels

We can understand how the true men drifted northward from the lost lands of the Mediterranean valley into the high Spanish valleys and the south and centre of France and so on to what is now England—for there was no Channel then between England and France—and eastward to the Rhineland and over the broad wilderness which is now the North Sea, and the German plain They would leave the snowy wilderness of the Alps, far higher then and covered with great glaciers away on their right These people drifted northward for the very good reason that their kind was multiplying and food diminishing They would be oppressed by feuds and wars They had no settled homes, they were accustomed to drift with the seasons, every now and then some band would be pushed by hunger and fear a little farther northward into the unknown

We can imagine the appearance of a little group of these wanderers, our ancestors, coming over some grassy crest into these northern lands The time would be late spring or early summer, and they would probably be following up some grazing beasts, a reindeer herd or horses

By a score of different means our anthropologists have been able to reconstruct the particulars of the appearance and habits of these early pilgrim fathers of mankind

They would not be a very numerous band, because if they were there would be no reason why they should have been driven northward out of their former roving grounds Two or three older men of thirty or so, eight or ten women and girls with a few young children, a

few lads between fourteen and twenty, might make up the whole community They would be a brownish brown eyed people with wavy dark hair, the fairness of the European and the straight blue black hair of the Chinaman had still to be evolved in the world The older men would probably lead the band, the women and children would keep apart from the youths and men, fenced off by complex and definite tabus from any close companionship The leaders would be tracking the herd they were following Tracking was then the supreme accomplishment of mankind By signs and traces that would be invisible to any modern civilised eye they would be reading the story of the previous day's trek of the herd of sturdy little horses ahead of them They would be so expert that they would go on from one faint sign to another with as little delay as a dog who follows a scent

The horses they were following were only a little way ahead—so the trackers read the signs—they were numerous and nothing had alarmed them They were grazing and moving only very slowly There were no traces of wild dog or other enemies to stampede them Some elephants were also going north, and twice our human tribe had crossed the spoor of woolly rhinoceros roaming westward

The tribe travelled light They were mainly naked but all of them were painted with white and black and red and yellow ochre At this distance of time it is difficult to see whether they were tattooed Probably they were not The babies and small children were carried by the women on their backs in slings or bags made of animal skins, and perhaps some or all of them wore mantles and loin bands of skin and had pouches and belts of leather The men had stone pointed spears, and carried sharpened flints in their hands

There was no Old Man who was lord and master and father of this particular crowd Weeks ago the Old Man had been charged and trampled to a jelly by

a great bull in the swamp far away Then two of the girls had been waylaid and carried off by the young men of another larger tribe It was because of these losses that this remnant was now seeking new hunting grounds

The landscape that spread before the eyes of this little band as they crested the hill was a bleaker, more desolate and altogether unkempt version of the landscape of western Europe to day About them was a grassy down athwart which a peewit flew with its melancholy cry Before them stretched a great valley ridged with transverse purple hills over which the April cloud shadows chased one another Pinewoods and black heather showed where these hills became sandy, and the valleys were full of brown brushwood, and down their undrained troughs ran a bright green band of peaty swamps and long pools of weedy water In the valley thickets many beasts lurked unseen, and where the winding streams had cut into the soil there were cliffs and caves Far away along the northern slopes of the ridge that were now revealed, the wild ponies were to be seen grazing

At a sign from the two leaders the little straggle of menfolk halted, and a woman who had been chattering in subdued tones to a little girl became silent The brothers surveyed the wide prospect earnestly

"Ugh!" said one abruptly and pointed

"Ugh!" cried his brother

The eyes of the whole tribe swung round to the pointing finger

The group became one rigid stare

Every soul of them stood still, astonishment had turned them into a tense group of statuettes

Far away down the slope with his body in profile and his head turned towards them, frozen by an equal amazement, stood a hunched grey figure, bigger but shorter than a man He had been creeping up behind a fold in the ground to peer at the ponies, and suddenly

he had turned his eyes and seen the tribe His head projected like a baboon's In his hand he carried what seemed to the menfolk a great rock

For a little while this animal scrutiny held discoverers and discovered motionless Then some of the women and children began to stir and line out to see the strange creature better "Man!" said an old crone of forty "*Man!*" At the movement of the women the grisly man turned ran clumsily for a score of yards or so towards a thicket of birch and budding thorn Then he halted again for a moment to look at the newcomers, waved an arm strangely and then dashed into cover

The shadows of the thicket swallowed him up, and by hiding him seemed to make him enormous It identified itself with him and watched them with h s eyes. Its tree stems became long s lvery limbs, and a fallen trunk crouched and stared

It was still early in the morning and the leaders of the tribe had hoped to come up with the wild ponies as the day advanced and perhaps cut one off and drive it into difficulties among the bushes and swampy places below, and wound it and follow it up and kill it Then they would have made a feast and somewhere down in the valley they would have found water and dry bracken for litter and a fire before night It had seemed a pleasant and hopeful morning to them until this moment Now they were disconcerted This grey figure was as if the sunny morning had suddenly made a horrible and inexplicable grimace

The whole expedition stood gazing for a time, and then the two leaders exchanged a few words Waugh, the elder, pointed Click his brother, nodded his head They would go on, but instead of slanting down the slopes towards the thickets they would keep round the ridge

"Come" said Waugh, and the little band began to move again But now it marched in silence When presently a little boy began a question his mother

silenced him by a threat Everybody kept glancing at the thickets below

Presently a girl cried out sharply and pointed All started and stopped short

There was the grisly thing again It was running across an open space, running almost on all fours, in joltering leaps It was hunchbacked and very big and low, a grey hairy wolf like monster At times its long arms nearly touched the ground It was nearer than it had been before It vanished amidst the bushes again It seemed to throw itself down among some red dead bracken

Waugh and Click took counsel

A mile away was the head of the valley where the thickets had their beginning Beyond stretched the woldy hills, bare of cover The horses were grazing up towards the sun, and away to the north the backs of a herd of woolly rhinoceros were now visible on a crest—just the ridges of their backs showing like a string of black beads

If the tribe struck across those grassy spaces then the lurking prowler would have either to stay behind or come into the open If he came into the open the dozen youths and men of the tribe would know how to deal with him

So they struck across the grass The little band worked round to the head of the valley, and there the menfolk stayed at the crest while the women and children pushed on ahead across the open

For a time the watchers remained motionless, and then Waugh was moved to gestures of defiance Click was not to be outdone There were shouts at the hidden watcher, and then one lad who was something of a clown, after certain grimaces and unpleasant gestures obliged with an excellent imitation of the grey thing's lumbering run At that, scare gave place to hilarity

In those days laughter was a social embrace Men could laugh, but there was no laughter in the grisly

pre-man who watched and wondered in the shadow He marvelled The men rolled about and guffawed and slapped their thighs and one another Tears ran down *their faces*

Never a sign came from the thickets

"Yahah' said the menfolk "Yahah! Bzzzz Yahah! Yah!"

They forgot altogether how frightened they had been

And when Waugh thought the women and children had gone on a sufficient distance, he gave the word for the men to follow them

In some such fashion it was that men, our ancestors, had their first glimpse of the pre men of the wilderness of western Europe

The two breeds were soon to come to closer quarters

The newcomers were pushing their way into the country of these grisly men Presently came other glimpses of lurking semi human shapes and grey forms that ran in the twilight In the morning Click found long narrow footprints round the camp

Then one day one of the children, eating those little green thorn buds that rustic English children speak of as bread and cheese ventured too far from the others There was a squeal and a scuffle and a thud, and some thing grey and hairy made off through the thickets [illegible] solitary Neandertaler they had to deal with Out of the bushes a big male came at them to cover the retreat of his mate and hurled a rock that bowled over the youth it hit like a nine pin, so that thereafter he limped always But Waugh with his throwing spear got the grey monster in the shoulder, and he halted snarling

No further sound came from the stolen child

The female showed herself for a moment up the gully snarling, bloodstained, and horrible, and the menfolk stood about afraid to continue their pursuit,

and yet not caring to desist from it One of them was already hobbling off with his hand to his knee

How did that first fight go?

[illegible] race Perhaps the [illegible] eard bristling ho [illegible] nderous roar with a great rock in either hand We do not know whether he threw those big discs of flint or whether he smote with them Perhaps it was then that Waugh was killed in the act of running away Perhaps it was bleak disaster then for the little tribe Short of two of its members it presently made off over the hills as fast as it could go, keeping together for safety, and leaving the wounded youth far behind to limp along its tracks in lonely terror

Let us suppose that he got back to the tribe at last—after nightmare hours

Now that Waugh had gone, Click would become Old Man and he made the tribe camp that night and build their fire on the high ridges among the heather far away from the thickets in which the grisly folk might be lurking

The grisly folk thought we knew not how about the menfolk, and the men thought about the grisly folk in such ways as we can understand, they imagined how their enemies might act in this fashion or that, and schemed to circumvent them It may have been Click who had the first dim idea of getting at the gorge in which the Neandertalers had their lair, from above For as we have said, the Neandertaler did not look up Then the menfolk could roll a great rock upon him or pelt him with burning brands and set the dry bracken alight

One likes to think of a victory for the human side This Click we have conjured up had run in panic from the first onset of the grisly male, but as he brooded by the fire that night he heard again in imagination the cry of the lost girl, and he was filled with rage In his

sleep the grisly male came to him and Click fought in his dreams and started awake stiff with fury There was a fascination for him in that gorge in which Waugh had been killed He was compelled to go back and look again for the grisly beasts, to waylay them in their tracks, and watch them from an ambush He perceived that the Neandertalers could not climb as easily as the menfolk could climb, nor hear so quickly, nor dodge with the same unexpectedness These grisly men were to be dealt with as the bears were dealt with, the bears before whom you run and scatter, and then come at again from behind

But one may doubt if the first human group to come into the grisly land was clever enough to solve the problems of the new warfare Maybe they turned southward again to the gentler regions from which they had come, and were killed by or mingled with their own [illegible]

and increased [illegible] kind to follow them and achieve a better fate

That was the beginning of a nightmare age for the little children of the human tribe They knew they were watched

Their steps were dogged The legends of ogres and man eating giants that haunt the childhood of the world may descend to us from those ancient days of fear And for the Neandertalers it was the beginning of an incessant war that could end only in extermination

The Neandertalers, albeit not so erect and tall as men, were the heavier, stronger creatures, but they were stupid, and they went alone or in twos and threes the menfolk were swifter, quicker witted, and more social —when they fought they fought in combination They lined out and surrounded and pestered and pelted their antagonists from every side They fought the men of *that grisly race as dogs might fight a bear They shouted*

to one another what each should do, and the Neandertaler had no speech, he did not understand They moved too quickly for him and fought too cunningly

Many and obstinate were the duels and battles these two sorts of men fought for this world in that bleak age of the windy steppes, thirty or forty thousand years ago The two races were intolerable to each other They both wanted the caves and the banks by the rivers where the big flints were got They fought over the dead mammoths that had been bogged in the marshes and over the reindeer stags that had been killed in the rutting season When a human tribe found signs of the grisly folk near their cave and squatting place, they had perforce to track them down and kill them, their own safety and the safety of their little ones was only to be secured by that killing The Neandertalers thought the little children of men fair game and pleasant eating

How long the grisly folk lived on in that chill world of pines and silver birch between the steppes and the glaciers, after the true menfolk came, we do not know For ages they may have held out, growing more cunning and dangerous as they became rare The true men hunted them down by their spoor and by their tracks and watched for the smoke of their fires, and made food scarce for them

Great Paladins arose in that forgotten world, men who stood forth and smote the grey man beast face to face and slew him They made long spears of wood hardened by fire at the tips, they raised shields of skin against his mighty blows They struck at him with stones on cords, and slung them at him with slings And it was not simply men who withstood the grisly beast but women They stood over their children they stood by their men against this eerie thing that was like and yet not like mankind Unless the *savants* read all the signs awry, it was the women who were the makers of the larger tribes into which human families were already growing in those ancient times It was the woman's

subtle, love guided wits which protected her sons from the fierce anger of the Old Man, and taught them to avoid his jealousy and wrath, and persuaded him to tolerate them and so have their help against the grisly enemy It was woman, says Atkinson, in the beginning of things human, who taught the primary tabus, that a son must go aside out of the way of his stepmother, and get himself a wife from another tribe, so as to keep the peace within the family She came between the fratricides, and was the first peacemaker Human societies in their beginnings were her work, done against the greater solitariness, the lonely fierceness of the adult male Through her, men learnt the primary co-operation of sonship and brotherhood The grisly folk had not learnt even the rudest elements of co-operation, and mankind had already spelt out the alphabet of a unity that may some day comprehend the whole earth The menfolk kept together by the dozen and by the score By ones and twos and threes therefore the grisly folk were beset and slain, until there were no more of them left in the world

Generation after generation, age after age, that long struggle for existence went on between these men who were not quite men and the men, our ancestors, who came out of the south into western Europe Thousands of fights and hunts, sudden murders and headlong escapes there were amidst the caves and thickets of that chill and windy world between the last age of glaciers and our own warmer time Until at length the last poor grisly was brought to bay and faced the spears of his pursuers in anger and despair

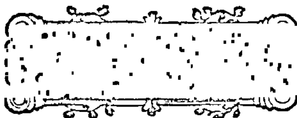
What leapings of the heart were there not throughout that long warfare! What moments of terror and triumph! What acts of devotion and desperate wonders of courage! And the strain of the victors was our strain; we are lineally identical with those sun brown painted beings who ran and fought and helped one another, the blood in our veins glowed in those fights and chilled in

those fears of the forgotten past For it was forgotten Except perhaps for some vague terrors in our dreaming life and for some lurking element of tradition in the legends and warnings of the nursery, it has gone altogether out of the memory of our race But nothing is ever completely lost Seventy or eighty years ago a few curious savants began to suspect that there were hidden memories in certain big chipped flints and scraps of bone they found in ancient gravels Much more recently others have begun to find hints of remote strange experiences in the dreams and odd kinks in modern minds By degrees these dry bones began to live again

This restoration of the past is one of the most astonishing adventures of the human mind As humanity follows the gropings of scientific men among these ancient vestiges, it is like a man who turns over the yellow pages of some long forgotten diary, some engagement book of his adolescence His dead youth lives again Once more the old excitements stir him, the old happiness returns But the old passions that once burnt only warm him now, and the old fears and distresses signify nothing

A day may come when these recovered memories may grow as vivid as if we in our own persons had been there and shared the thrill and the fear of those primordial days, a day may come when the great beasts of the past will leap to life again in our imaginations, when we shall walk again in vanished scenes, stretch painted limbs we thought were dust, and feel again the sunshine of a million years ago

TALES OF SPACE AND TIME



STORY THE FIRST

The Crystal Egg

THERE was, until a year ago a little and very grimy looking shop near Seven Dials, over which, in weather worn yellow lettering the name of "C Cave, Naturalist and Dealer in Antiquities," was inscribed The contents of its window were curiously varied They comprised some elephant tusks and an imperfect set of chessmen, beads and weapons a box of eyes, two skulls of tigers and one human several moth eaten stuffed monkeys (one holding a lamp) an old fashioned cabinet, a fly blown ostrich egg or so, some fishing tackle, and an extraordinarily dirty, empty glass fish tank There was also at the moment the story begins, a mass of crystal, worked into the shape of an egg and brilliantly polished And at that two people, who stood outside the window, were looking, one of them a tall, thin clergyman, the other a black bearded young man of dusky complexion and unobtrusive costume The dusky young man spoke with eager gesticulation, and seemed anxious for his companion to purchase the article

While they were there, Mr Cave came into his shop, his beard still wagging with the bread and butter of his

ness The poor little man, quivering with emotion mud lled himself between his stories, maintaining on the one hand that he had another customer in view, and on the other asserting that the crystal was honestly worth ten guineas "Why d d you ask five pounds?" said his wife *Do* let me manage my business my own way!" said Mr Cave!

Mr Cave had living with him a step-daughter and a step son, and at supper that night the transaction was re discussed None of them had a high opinion of Mr Cave's business methods, and this action seemed a culminating folly

"It's my opinion he's refused that crystal before," said the step son, a loose limbed lout of eighteen

"But *Five Pounds!*" said the step daughter, an argumentative young woman of six and twenty

Mr Cave's answers were wretched he could only mumble weak assertions that he knew his own business best They drove him from his half eaten supper into the shop, to close it for the night, his ears aflame and tears of vexation behind his spectacles "Why had he left the crystal in the window so long? The folly of it!" That was the trouble closest in his mind For a time he could see no way of evading sale.

After supper his step daughter and step son smartened themselves up and went out and his wife retired upstairs to reflect upon the business aspects of the crystal, over a little sugar and lemon and so forth in hot water Mr Cave went into the shop, and stayed there until late, ostensibly to make ornamental rockeries for gold fish cases but really for a private purpose that will be better explained later The next day Mrs Cave found that the crystal had been removed from the window, and was lying behind some second hand books on angling She replaced it in a conspicuous position But she did not argue further about it, as a nervous headache disinclined her from debate Mr Cave was always disinclined. The day passed disagreeably Mr

Cave was, if anything, more absent minded than usual, and uncommonly irritable withal In the afternoon, when his wife was taking her customary sleep, he re moved the crystal from the window again

The next day Mr Cave had to deliver a consignment of dog fish at one of the hospital schools, where they were needed for dissection In his absence Mrs Cave's mind reverted to the topic of the crystal, and the methods of expenditure suitable to a windfall of five pounds She had already devised some very agreeable expedients, among others a dress of green silk for her self and a trip to Richmond, when a jangling of the front door bell summoned her into the shop The customer was an examination coach who came to com plain of the non delivery of certain frogs asked for the previous day Mrs Cave did not approve of this particular branch of Mr Cave's business, and the gentle man, who had called in a somewhat aggressive mood, retired after a brief exchange of words—entirely civil so far as he was concerned Mrs Cave's eye then naturally turned to the window, for the sight of the crystal was an assurance of the five pounds and of her dreams What was her surprise to find it gone!

She went to the place behind the locker on the counter, where she had discovered it the day before It was not there and she immediately began an eager search about the shop

When Mr Cave returned from his business with the dog fish about a quarter to two in the afternoon he found the shop in some confusion, and his wife extremely exasperated and on her knees behind the counter routing among his taxidermic material Her face came up hot and angry over the counter as the jangling bell announced his return, and she forthwith accused him of "hiding it"

"Hid *what?*" asked Mr Cave

"The crystal!"

At that Mr Cave, apparently much surprised, rushed

to the window "Isn't it here?" he said "Great Heavens! what has become o it?"

Just then, Mr Cave's step son re entered the shop from the inner room—he had come home a minute or so before Mr Cave—and he was blaspheming freely He was apprenticed to a second hand furniture dealer down the road, but he had his meals at home, and he was naturally annoyed to find no dinner ready

But, when he heard of the loss of the crystal, he forgot his meal, and his anger was diverted from his mother to his step father Their first idea, of course, was that he had hidden it But Mr Cave stoutly denied all knowledge of its fate—freely offering his bedabbled affidavit in the matter—and at last was worked up to the point of accusing, first, his wife and then his step-son of having taken it with a view to a private sale So began an exceedingly acrimonious and emotional discussion which ended for Mrs Cave in a peculiar nervous condition midway between hysterics and amuck and caused the step son to be half an hour late at the furniture establishment in the afternoon Mr Cave took refuge from his wife's emotions in the shop

In the evening the matter was resumed, with less passion and in a judicial spirit, under the presidency of the step daughter The supper passed unhappily and culminated in a painful scene Mr Cave gave way at last to extreme exasperation, and went out banging the front door violently The rest of the family, having discussed him with the freedom his absence warranted hunted the house from garret to cellar, hoping to light upon the crystal

The next day the two customers called again They were received by Mrs Cave almost in tears I transpired that no one *could* imagine all that she had [illegible]

[illegible] dis

[illegible] ched

[illegible] ters

silently at one another, and said it was ve y

ordinary As Mrs Cave seemed disposed to give them the complete history of her life they made to leave the shop *Thereupon Mrs Cave, still clinging to hope,* asked for the clergyman's address, so that, if she could get anything out of Cave, she might communicate it The address was duly given, but apparently was afterwards mislaid Mrs Cave can remember nothing about it

In the evening of that day, the Caves seem to have exhausted their emotions and Mr Cave who had been out in the afternoon, supped in a gloomy isolation that contrasted pleasantly with the impassioned controversy of the previous days For some time matters were very *badly strained in the Cave household, but neither crystal* nor customer reappeared

Now without mincing the matter, we must admit that Mr Cave was a liar He knew perfectly well where the crystal was It was in the rooms of Mr Jacoby Wace, Assistant Demonstrator at St Catherine's Hospital, Westbourne Street It stood on the sideboard partially covered by a black velvet cloth and beside a decanter of American whisky It is from Mr Wace, indeed *that the particulars upon which this narrative* is based were derived Cave had taken off the thing to the hospital hidden in the dog fish sack, and there had pressed the young investigator to keep it for him Mr Wace was a little dubious at first His relationship to Cave was peculiar He had a taste for singular characters, and he had more than once invited the old man to smoke and drink in his rooms, and to unfold his rather amusing views of life in general and of his wife in particular Mr Wace had encountered Mrs Cave, too on occasions when Mr Cave was not at home to attend to him He knew the constant interference to which Cave was subjected, and having weighed the story judicially, he decided to give the crystal a refuge Mr Cave promised to explain the reasons for his remarkable affection for the crystal more fully on a later occasion,

curious observations He seems to have been living in such an atmosphere of petty spite that to admit the existence of a pleasure would have been to risk the loss of it He found that as the dawn advanced, and the amount of diffused light increased, the crystal became to all appearance non luminous And for some time he was unable to see anything in it, except at night time in dark corners of the shop

But the use of an old velvet cloth, which he used as a background for a collection of minerals occurred to him and by doubling this, and putting it over his head and hands, he was able to get a sight of the luminous movement within the crystal even in the day time He was very cautious lest he should be thus discovered by his wife, and he practised this occupation only in the afternoons, while she was asleep upstairs and then circumspectly in a hollow under the counter And one day, turning the crystal about in his hands he saw something It came and went like a flash, but it gave him the impression that the object had for a moment opened to him the view of a wide and spacious and strange country, and, turning it about, he did, just as the light faded, see the same vision again

Now it would be tedious and unnecessary to state all the phases of Mr Cave's discovery from this point. Suffice that the effect was this the crystal, being peered into at an angle of about 137 degrees from the direction of the illuminating ray gave a clear and consistent picture of a wide and peculiar country side It was not dream like at all, it produced a definite impression of reality, and the better the light the more real and solid it seemed It was a moving picture that is to say, certain objects moved in it, but slowly in an orderly manner like real things, and, according as the direction of the lighting and vision changed, the picture changed also It must, indeed, have been like looking through an oval glass at a view, and turning the glass about to get at different aspects

Mr Cave's statements, Mr Wace assures me, were extremely circumstantial, and entirely free from any of that emotional quality that taints hallucinatory impressions But it must be remembered that all the efforts of Mr Wace to see any similar clarity in the faint opalescence of the crystal were wholly unsuccessful, try as he would The difference in intensity of the impressions received by the two men was very great and it is quite conceivable that what was a view to Mr Cave was a mere blurred nebulosity to Mr Wace

The view, as Mr Cave described it, was invariably of an extensive plain, and he seemed always to be looking at it from a considerable height, as if from a tower or a mast To the east and to the west the plain was bounded at a remote distance by vast reddish cliffs which reminded him of those he had seen in some picture but what the picture was Mr Wace was unable to ascertain These cliffs passed north and south—he could tell the points of the compass by the stars that were visible of a night—receding in an almost illimitable perspective and fading into the mists of the distance before they met He was nearer the eastern set of cliffs

also trees curious in shape, and in colouring, a deep mossy green and an exquisite grey, beside a wide and shining canal And something great and brilliantly coloured flew across the picture But the first time Mr Cave saw these pictures he saw only in flashes his hands shook, his head moved, the vision came and went and grew foggy and indistinct And at first he had the greatest difficulty in finding the picture again once the direction of it was lost

His next clear vision, which came about a week after the first, the interval having yielded nothing but tantalising glimpses and some useful experience, showed him the view down the length of the valley The view was different, but he had a curious persuasion, which his subsequent observations abundantly confirmed, that he was regarding this strange world from exactly the same spot, although he was looking in a different direction The long façade of the great building, whose roof he had looked down upon before, was now receding in perspective He recognised the roof In the front of the façade was a terrace of massive proportions and extraordinary length, and down the middle of the terrace, at certain intervals, stood huge but very graceful masts, bearing small shiny objects which reflected the setting sun The import of these small objects did not occur to Mr Cave until some time after, as he was describing the scene to Mr Wace The terrace overhung a thicket of the most luxuriant and graceful vegetation, and beyond this was a wide grassy lawn on which certain broad creatures in form like beetles but enormously larger, reposed Beyond this again was a richly decorated causeway of pinkish stone, and beyond that, and lined with dense *red* weeds, and passing up the valley exactly parallel with the distant cliffs, was a broad and mirror like expanse of water The air seemed full of squadrons of great birds, manœuvring in stately curves and across the river was a multitude of splendid buildings, richly coloured and glittering with metallic tracery and facets, among a forest of moss-like and lichenous trees And suddenly something flapped repeatedly across the vision, like the fluttering of a jewelled fan or the beating of a wing, and a face, or rather the upper part of a face with very large eyes, came as it were close to his own and as if on the other side of the crystal Mr Cave was so startled and so impressed by the absolute reality of these eyes, that he drew his head back from the crystal to look behind it He had become so

absorbed in watching that he was quite surprised to find himself in the cool darkness of his little shop, with its familiar odour of methyl, mustiness, and decay And, as he blinked about him, the glowing crystal faded, and went out

Such were the first general impressions of Mr Cave The story is curiously direct and circumstantial From the outset, when the valley first flashed momentarily on his senses, his imagination was strangely affected, and, as he began to appreciate the details of the scene he saw, his wonder rose to the point of a passion He went about his business listless and distraught, thinking only of the time when he should be able to return to his watching And then a few weeks after his first sight of the valley came the two customers, the stress and excitement of their offer, and the narrow escape of the crystal from sale, as I have already told

Now while the thing was Mr Cave's secret, it remained a mere wonder, a thing to creep to covertly and peep at, as a child might peep upon a forbidden garden But Mr Wace has, for a young scientific investigator, a particularly lucid and consecutive habit of mind Directly the crystal and its story came to him, and he had satisfied himself, by seeing the phosphorescence with his own eyes, that there really was a certain evidence for Mr Cave's statements, he proceeded to develop the matter systematically Mr Cave was only too eager to come and feast his eyes on this wonderland he saw, and he came every night from half past eight until half past ten, and sometimes, in Mr Wace's absence, during the day On Sunday afternoons, also, he came From the outset Mr Wace made copious notes, and it was due to his scientific method that the relation between the direction from which the initiating ray entered the crystal and the orientation of the picture was proved And, by covering the crystal in a box perforated only with a small aperture to admit the exciting ray, and by substituting black holland for his

buff blinds, he greatly improved the conditions of the observations, so that in a little while they were able to survey the valley in any direction they desired

So having cleared the way, we may give a brief account of this visionary world within the crystal The things were in all cases seen by Mr Cave, and the method of working was invariably for him to watch the crystal and report what he saw, while Mr Wace (who as a science student had learnt the trick of writing in the dark) wrote a brief note of his report When the crystal faded, it was put into its box in the proper position and the electric light turned on Mr Wace asked questions, and suggested observations to clear up difficult points Nothing, indeed, could have been less visionary and more matter of fact

The attention of Mr Cave had been speedily directed to the bird like creatures he had seen so abundantly present in each of his earlier visions His first im pression was soon corrected, and he considered for a time that they might represent a diurnal species of bat Then he thought, grotesquely enough, that they might be cherubs Their heads were round, and curiously human, and it was the eyes of one of them that had so startled him on his second observation They had broad, silvery wings, not feathered, but glistening almost as brilliantly as new killed fish and with the same subtle play of colour, and these wings were not built on the plan of bird wing or bat, Mr Wace learned, but sup ported by curved ribs radiating from the body (A sort of butterfly wing with curved ribs seems best to express their appearance) The body was small but fitted with two bunches of prehensile organs, like long tentacles immediately under the mouth Incredible as it appeared to Mr Wace, the persuasion at last became irresistible that it was these creatures which owned the great quasi human buildings and the magnificent garden that made the broad valley so splendid And Mr Cave perceived that the buildings, with other peculiari

ties, had no doors, but that the great circular windows, which opened freely, gave the creatures egress and entrance They would alight upon their tentacles, fold their wings to a smallness almost rod like, and hop into the interior But among them was a multitude of smaller winged creatures, like great dragon flies and moths and flying beetles, and across the greensward brilliantly coloured gigantic ground beetles crawled lazily to and fro Moreover, on the causeways and terraces large headed creatures similar to the greater winged flies, but wingless, were visible, hopping busily upon their hand like tangle of tentacles

Allusion has already been made to the glittering objects upon masts that stood upon the terrace of the nearer building It dawned upon Mr Cave, after regarding one of these masts very fixedly on one particu larly vivid day, that the glittering object there was a crystal exactly like that into which he peered And a still more careful scrutiny convinced him that each one in a vista of nearly twenty carried a similar object

Occasionally one of the large flying creatures would flutter up to one, and, folding its wings and coiling a number of its tentacles about the mast would regard the crystal fixedly for a space,—sometimes for as long as fifteen minutes And a series of observations, made at the suggestion of Mr Wace, convinced both watchers that, so far as this visionary world was concerned, the crystal into which they peered actually stood at the summit of the end most mast on the terrace, and that on one occasion at least one of these inhabitants of this other world had looked into Mr Cave's face while he was making these observations

So much for the essential facts of this very singular story Unless we dismiss it all as the ingenious fabrica tion of Mr Wace we have to believe one of two things either that Mr Cave's crystal was in two worlds at once, and that, while it was carried about in one, it remained stationary in the other, which seems

altogether absurd or else that it had some peculiar relation of sympathy with another and exactly similar crystal in this other world, so that what was seen in the interior of the one in this world was, under suitable conditions, visible to an observer in the corresponding crystal in the other world, and *vice versa* At present, indeed, we do not know of any way in which two crystals could so come *en rapport*, but nowadays we know enough to understand that the thing is not altogether impossible This view of the crystals as *en rapport* was the supposition that occurred to Mr Wace, and to me at least it seems extremely plausible

And where was this other world? On this, also, the alert intelligence of Mr Wace speedily threw light After sunset, the sky darkened rapidly—there was a very brief twilight interval indeed—and the stars shone out They were recognisably the same as those we see, arranged in the same constellations Mr Cave recognised the Bear, the Pleiades, Aldebaran, and Sirius so that the other world must be somewhere in the solar system, and, at the utmost, only a few hundreds of millions of miles from our own Following up this clue, Mr Wace learned that the midnight sky was a darker blue even than our midwinter sky, and that the sun seemed a little smaller *And there were two small moons!* "like our moon but smaller, and quite differently marked" one of which moved so rapidly that its motion was clearly visible as one regarded it These moons were never high in the sky, but vanished as they rose that is, every time they revolved they were eclipsed because they were so near their primary planet And all this answers quite completely, although Mr Cave did not know it, to what must be the condition of things on Mars

Indeed, it seems an exceedingly plausible conclusion that peering into this crystal Mr Cave did actually see the planet Mars and its inhabitants And, if that be the case, then the evening star that shone so brilliantly

in the sky of that distant vision, was neither more nor less than our own familiar earth

For a time the Martians—if they were Martians—do not seem to have known of Mr Cave's inspection Once or twice one would come to peer, and go away very shortly to some other mast, as though the vision was unsatisfactory During this time Mr Cave was able to watch the proceedings of these winged people without being disturbed by their attentions, and, although his report is necessarily vague and fragmentary, it is nevertheless very suggestive Imagine the impression of humanity a Martian observer would get who after a difficult process of preparation and with considerable fatigue to the eyes, was able to peer at London from the steeple of St Martin's Church for stretches at longest of four minutes at a time Mr Cave was unable to ascertain if the winged Martians were the same as the Martians who hopped about the causeways and terraces, and if the latter could put on wings at will He several times saw certain clumsy bipeds, dimly suggestive of apes white and partially translucent, feeding among certain of the lichenous trees, and once some of these fled before one of the hopping, round headed Martians The latter caught one in its tentacles, and then the picture faded suddenly and left Mr Cave most tantalisingly in the dark On another occasion a vast thing that Mr Cave thought at first was some gigantic insect appeared advancing along the causeway beside the canal with extraordinary rapidity As this drew nearer Mr Cave perceived that it was a mechanism of shining metals and of extraordinary complexity And then when he looked again, it had passed out of sight

After a time Mr Wace aspired to attract the attention of the Martians and the next time that the strange eyes of one of them appeared close to the crystal Mr Cave cried out and sprang away, and they immediately turned on the light and began to gesticulate in a manner suggestive of signalling But when at last

Mr Cave examined the crystal again the Martian had departed

Thus far these observations had progressed in early November, and then Mr Cave feeling that the suspicions of his family about the crystal were allayed, began to take it to and fro with him in order that as occasion arose in the daytime or night, he might comfort himself with what was fast becoming the most real thing in his existence

In December Mr Wace's work in connection with a forthcoming examination became heavy, the sittings were reluctantly suspended for a week and for ten or eleven days—he is not quite sure which—he saw nothing of Cave He then grew anxious to resume these investigations and, the stress of his seasonal labours being abated, he went down to Seven Dials At the corner he noticed a shutter before a bird fancier's window, and then another at a cobbler's Mr Cave's shop was closed

He rapped and the door was opened by the step son in black He at once called Mrs Cave, who was Mr Wace could not but observe in cheap but ample widow's weeds of the most imposing pattern Without any very great surprise Mr Wace learnt that Cave was dead and already buried She was in tears and her voice was a little thick She had just returned from Highgate Her mind seemed occupied with her own prospects and the honourable details of the obsequies but Mr Wace was at last able to learn the particulars of Cave's death He had been found dead in his shop in the early morning the day after his last visit to Mr Wace, and the crystal had been clasped in his stone cold hands His face was smiling said Mrs Cave and the velvet cloth from the minerals lay on the floor at his feet He must have been dead five or six hours when he was found

This came as a great shock to Wace and he began to reproach himself bitterly for having neglected the plain

symptoms of the old man's ill health But his chief thought was of the crystal He approached that topic in a gingerly manner, because he knew Mrs Cave's peculiarities He was dumbfounded to learn that it was sold

Mrs Cave's first impulse, directly Cave's body had been taken upstairs, had been to write to the mad clergyman who had offered five pounds for the crystal, informing him of its recovery, but after a violent hunt in which her daughter joined her, they were convinced of the loss of his address As they were without the means required to mourn and bury Cave in the elaborate style the dignity of an old Seven Dials inhabitant demands, they had appealed to a friendly fellow trades man in Great Portland Street He had very kindly taken over a portion of the stock at a valuation The valuation was his own and the crystal egg was included in one of the lots Mr Wace, after a few suitable consolatory observations, a little off handedly proffered perhaps, hurried at once to Great Portland Street But there he learned that the crystal egg had already been sold to a tall, dark man in grey And there the material facts in this curious, and to me at least very suggestive, story come abruptly to an end The Great Portland Street dealer did not know who the tall dark man in grey was, nor had he observed him with sufficient atten tion to describe him minutely He did not even know which way this person had gone after leaving the shop For a time Mr Wace remained in the shop, trying the dealer's patience with hopeless questions, venting his own exasperation And at last, realising abruptly that the whole thing had passed out of his hands, had vanished like a vision of the night, he returned to his own rooms a little astonished to find the notes he had made still tangible and visible upon his untidy table.

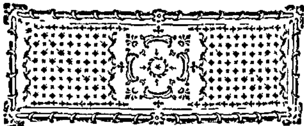
His annoyance and disappointment were naturally very great He made a second call (equally ineffectual) upon the Great Portland Street dealer, and he resorted

to advertisements in such periodicals as were likely to come into the hands of a bric a brac collector He also wrote letters to *The Daily Chronicle* and *Nature*, but both those periodicals, suspecting a hoax, asked him to reconsider his action before they printed and he was advised that such a strange story, unfortunately so bare of supporting evidence, might imperil his reputation as an investigator Moreover, the calls of his proper work were urgent So that after a month or so save for an occasional reminder to certain dealers, he had reluctantly to abandon the quest for the crystal egg and from that day to this it remains undiscovered Occasionally how ever, he tells me, and I can quite believe him, he has bursts of zeal in which he abandons his more urgent occupation and resumes the search

Whether or not it will remain lost for ever, with the material and origin of it, are things equally speculative at the present time If the present purchaser is a collector, one would have expected the enquiries of Mr Wace to have reached him through the dealers He has been able to discover Mr Cave's clergyman and "Oriental"—no other than the Rev James Parker and the young Prince of Bosso Kuni in Java I am obliged to them for certain particulars The object of the Prince was simply curiosity—and extravagance He was so eager to buy, because Cave was so oddly reluctant to sell It is just as possible that the buyer in the second instance was simply a casual purchaser and not a collector at all, and the crystal egg for all I know, may at the present moment be within a mile of me decorat ing a drawing room or serving as a paper weight—its remarkable functions all unknown Indeed, it is partly with the idea of such a possibility that I have thrown this narrative into a form that will give it a chance of being read by the ordinary consumer of fiction

My own ideas in the matter are practically identical with those of Mr Wace I believe the crystal on the mast in Mars and the crystal egg of Mr Cave's to be in

some physical, but at present quite inexplicable, way *en rapport*, and we both believe further that the terrestrial crystal must have been—possibly at some remote date—sent hither from that planet, in order to give the Martians a near view of our affairs Possibly the fellows to the crystals in the other masts are also on our globe. No theory of hallucination suffices for the facts



STORY THE SECOND

The Star

IT was on the first day of the new year that the announcement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatories, that the motion of the planet Neptune, the outermost of all the planets that wheel about the sun had become very erratic Ogilvy had already called attention to a suspected retardation in its velocity in December Such a piece of news was scarcely calculated to interest a world the greater portion of whose inhabitants were unaware of the existence of the planet Neptune, nor outside the astronomical profession did the subsequent discovery of a faint remote speck of light in the region of the perturbed planet cause any very great excitement Scientific people, however, found the intelligence remarkable enough even before it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larger and brighter, that its motion was quite different from the orderly progress

of the planets, and that the deflection of Neptune and its satellite was becoming now of an unprecedented kind

Few people without a training in science can realise the huge isolation of the solar system The sun with its specks of planets its dust of planetoids, and its impalpable comets, swims in a vacant immensity that almost defeats the imagination Beyond the orbit of Neptune there is space, vacant so far as human observation has penetrated, without warmth or light or sound, blank emptiness for twenty million times a million miles That is the smallest estimate of the distance to be traversed before the very nearest of the stars is attained And, saving a few comets more unsubstantial than the thinnest flame no matter had ever to human knowledge crossed this gulf of space, until early in the *twentieth century this strange wanderer appeared* A vast mass of matter it was, bulky, heavy, rushing without warning out of the black mystery of the sky into the radiance of the sun By the second day it was clearly visible to any decent instrument, as a speck with a barely sensible diameter, in the constellation Leo near Regulus In a little while an opera glass could attain it

On the third day of the new year the newspaper readers of two hemispheres were made aware for the first time of the real importance of this unusual apparition in the heavens "A Planetary Collision," one London paper headed the news, and proclaimed Duchaine's opinion that this strange new planet would probably collide with Neptune The leader writers enlarged upon the topic So that in most of the capitals of the world, on January 3rd, there was an expectation, however vague, of some imminent phenomenon in the sky, and as the night followed the sunset round the globe, thousands of men turned their eyes skyward to see—the old familiar stars just as they had always been

Until it was dawn in London and Pollux setting and

interest they did not feel "Nearer! Indeed. How curious! How very, very clever people must be to find out things like that!"

Lonely tramps faring through the wintry night murmured those words to comfort themselves—looking skyward "It has need to be nearer, for the night's as cold as charity Don't seem much warmth from it if it *is* nearer all the same"

"What is a new star to me?" cried the weeping woman kneeling beside her dead

The schoolbc [illegible] work puzzled it out [illegible] shining broad a [illegible] window "Centrifugal, centripetal," he said, [illegible] chin on his fist "Stop a planet in its flight, rob it of its centrifugal force, what then? Centripetal has it, and down it falls into the sun! And this—!"

"Do *we* come in the way? I wonder—"

The light of that day went the way of its brethren and with the later watches of the frosty darkness rose the strange star again And it was now so bright that the waxing moon seemed but a pale yellow ghost of itself, hanging huge in the sunset In a South African city a great man had married, and the streets were alight to welcome his return with his bride "Even the skies have illuminated," said the flatterer Under Capricorn two negro lovers, daring the wild beasts and evil spirits for love of one another, crouched together in a cane brake where the fire flies hovered "That is our star" they whispered, and felt strangely comforted by the sweet brilliance of its light

The master mathematician sat in his private room and pushed the papers from him His calculations were already finished In a small white phial there still remained a little of the drug that had kept him awake and active for four long nights Each day, serene explicit, patient as ever, he had given his lecture to his students, and then had come back at once to this

momentous calculation His face was grave, a little drawn and hectic from his drugged activity For some time he seemed lost in thought Then he went to the window, and the blind went up with a click Half way up the sky, over the clustering roofs, chimneys and steeples of the city, hung the star

He looked at it as one might look into the eyes of a brave enemy "You may kill me," he said after a silence "But I can hold you—and all the universe for that matter—in the grip of this little brain I would not change Even now"

He looked at the little phial "There will be no need of sleep again," he said The next day at noon, punctual to the minute, he entered his lecture theatre, put his hat on the end of the table as his habit was, and carefully selected a large piece of chalk It was a joke among his students that he could not lecture without that piece of chalk to fumble in his fingers, and once he had been stricken to impotence by their hiding his supply He came and looked under his grey eyebrows at the rising tiers of young fresh faces, and spoke with his accustomed studied commonness of phrasing "Circumstances have arisen—circumstances beyond my control," he said and paused, "which will debar me from completing the course I had designed It would seem, gentlemen, if I may put the thing clearly and briefly, that—Man has lived in vain"

The students glanced at one another Had they heard aright? Mad? Raised eyebrows and grinning lips there were, but one or two faces remained intent upon his calm grey fringed face "It will be interesting," he was saying, "to devote this morning to an exposition, so far as I can make it clear to you, of the calculations that have led me to this conclusion Let us assume—"

He turned towards the blackboard, meditating a diagram in the way that was usual to him "What was that about 'lived in vain'?" whispered one student

interest they did not feel "Nearer! Indeed How curious! How very, very clever people must be to find out things like that!"

Lonely tramps faring through the wintry night murmured those words to comfort themselves—looking skyward "It has need to be nearer, for the night's as cold as charity Don't seem much warmth from it if it is nearer, all the same"

'What is a new star to me?" cried the weeping woman kneeling beside her dead

The schoolboy, rising early for his examination work puzzled it out for himself—with the great white star shining broad and bright through the frost flowers of his window 'Centrifugal, centripetal," he said, with his chin on his fist "Stop a planet in its flight, rob it of its centrifugal force, what then? Centripetal has it, and down it falls into the sun! And this—!"

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hot, and a breath of hot wind blew now with its rising and gathering strength, and in Virginia, and Brazil and down the St Lawrence valley, it shone intermittently through a *driving reek of thunder-clouds,* flickering violet lightning, and hail unprecedented In Manitoba was a thaw and devastating floods And upon all the mountains of the earth the snow and ice began to melt that night, and all the rivers coming out of high country flowed thick and turbid, and soon—n their upper reaches—with swirling trees and the oodies of beasts and men They rose steadily, steadily n the ghostly brilliance, and came trickling over their oanks at last, behind the flying population of their alleys

And along the coast of Argentina and up the South Atlantic the tides were higher than had ever been in he memory of man, and the storms drove the waters n many cases scores of miles inland, drowning whole ities And so great grew the heat during the night hat the rising of the sun was like the coming of a shadow The earthquakes began and grew until all down America from the Arctic Circle to Cape Horn hillsides were sliding fissures were opening and houses nd walls crumbling to destruction The whole side of otopaxi slipped out in one vast convulsion, and a umult of lava poured out so high and broad and swift nd liquid that in one day it reached the sea

So the star, with the wan moon in its wake, marched cross the Pacific, trailed the thunderstorms like the hem of a robe and the growing t dal wave that toiled ehind it, frothing and eager, poured over island and sland and swept them clear of men Until that wave ame at last—in a blinding light and with the breath f a furnace, swift and terrible it came—a wall of water, fifty feet high, roaring hungrily, upon the ong coasts of Asia, and swept inland across the plains f China For a space the star, hotter now and larger nd brighter than the sun in its strength, showed with

pitiless brilliance the wide and populous country, towns and villages with their pagodas and trees, roads wide cultivated fields, millions of sleepless people staring in helpless terror at the incandescent sky; and then low and growing came the murmur of the flood And thus it was with millions of men that night—a flight nowhither, with limbs heavy with heat and breath fierce and scant, and the flood like a wall swift and white behind And then death

China was lit glowing white, but over Japan and Java and all the islands of Eastern Asia the great star was a ball of dull red fire because of the steam and smoke and ashes the volcanoes were spouting forth to salute its coming Above was the lava hot gases and ash, and below the seething floods and the whole earth swayed and rumbled with the earthquake shocks Soon the immemorial snows of Thibet and the Himalaya were melting and pouring down by ten million deepening converging channels upon the plains of Burmah and Hindostan The tangled summits of the Indian jungles were aflame in a thousand places, and below the hurrying waters around the stems were dark objects that still struggled feebly and reflected the blood red tongues of fire And in a rudderless confusion a multitude of men and women fled down the broad river ways to that one last hope of men—the open sea

Larger grew the star, and larger, hotter, and brighter with a terrible swiftness now The tropical ocean had lost its phosphorescence, and the whirling steam rose in ghostly wreaths from the black waves that plunged incessantly, speckled with storm tossed ships

And then came a wonder It seemed to those who in Europe watched for the rising of the star that the world must have ceased its rotation In a thousand open spaces of down and upland the people who had fled thither from the floods and the falling houses and sliding slopes of hill watched for that rising in vain Hour followed hour through a terrible suspense, and

the star rose not Once again men set their eyes upon the old constellations they had counted lost to them forever In England it was hot and clear overhead, though the ground quivered perpetually, but in the tropics, Sirius and Capella and Aldebaran showed through a veil of steam And when at last the great star rose near ten hours late, the sun rose close upon it, and in the centre of its white heart was a disc of black

Over Asia it was the star had begun to fall behind the movement of the sky, and then suddenly, as it hung over India, its light had been veiled All the plain of India from the mouth of the Indus to the mouths of the Ganges was a shallow waste of shining water that night, out of which rose temples and palaces, mounds and hills, black with people Every minaret was a clustering mass of people, who fell one by one into the turbid waters, as heat and terror overcame them The whole land seemed a wailing, and suddenly there swept a shadow across that furnace of despair, and a breath of cold wind, and a gathering of clouds, out of the cooling air Men looking up, near blinded, at the star, saw that a black disc was creeping across the light It was the moon, coming between the star and the earth And even as men cried to God at this respite, out of the East with a strange inexplicable swiftness sprang the sun And then star, sun and moon rushed together across the heavens

So it was that presently, to the European watchers, star and sun rose close upon each other, drove headlong for a space and then slower, and at last came to rest, star and sun merged into one glare of flame at the zenith of the sky The moon no longer eclipsed the star but was lost to sight in the brilliance of the sky And though those who were still alive regarded it for the most part with that dull stupidity that hunger, fatigue, heat and despair engender, there were still men who could perceive the meaning of these signs Star and earth had been at their nearest, had swung about

one another, and the star had passed Already it was receding, swifter and swifter, in the last stage of its headlong journey downward into the sun

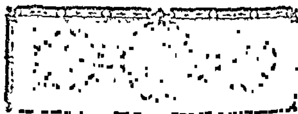
And then the clouds gathered, blotting out the vision of the sky, the thunder and lightning wove a garment round the world, all over the earth was such a downpour of rain as men had never before seen, and where the volcanoes flared red against the cloud canopy there descended torrents of mud Everywhere the waters were pouring off the land, leaving mud silted ruins and the earth littered like a storm worn beach with all that had floated, and the dead bodies of the men and brutes, its children For days the water streamed off the land, sweeping away soil and trees and houses in the way, and piling huge dykes and scooping out Titanic gullies over the country side Those were the days of darkness that followed the star and the heat All through them, and for many weeks and months the earthquakes continued

But the star had passed, and men, hunger driven and gathering courage only slowly, might creep back to their ruined cities, buried granaries, and sodden fields Such few ships as had escaped the storms of that time came stunned and shattered and sounding their way cautiously through the new marks and shoals of once familiar ports And as the storms subsided men perceived that everywhere the days were hotter than of yore and the sun larger, and the moon, shrunk to a third of its former size took now fourscore days between its new and new

But of the new brotherhood that grew presently among men, of the saving of laws and books and machines, of the strange change that had come over Iceland and Greenland and the shores of Baffin's Bay, so that the sailors coming there presently found them green and gracious, and could scarce believe their eyes, this story does not tell Nor of the movement of mankind now that the earth was hotter, northward and southward towards the poles of the earth It concerns

itself only with the coming and the passing of the Star

The Martian astronomers—for there are astronomers on Mars although they are very different beings from men—were naturally profoundly interested by these things They saw them from their own standpoint of course "Considering the mass and temperature of the missile that was flung through our solar system into the sun," one wrote, "it is astonishing what a little damage the earth, which it missed so narrowly, has sustained All the familiar continental markings and the masses of the seas remain intact, and indeed the only difference seems to be a shrinkage of the white discoloration (supposed to be frozen water) round either pole" Which only shows how small the vastest of human catastrophes may seem, at a distance of a few million miles.



STORY THE THIRD

A Story of the Stone Age

I—Ugh-lomi and Uya

THIS story is of a time beyond the memory of man, before the beginning of history, a time when one might have walked dryshod from France (as we call it now) to England, and when a broad and sluggish Thames flowed through its marshes to meet its father Rhine, flowing through a wide and level country that is under water in these latter days, and which we know by the name of the North Sea. In that remote age the valley which runs along the foot of the Downs did not exist, and the south of Surrey was a range of hills, fir-clad on the middle slopes, and snow-capped for the better part of the year. The cores of its summits still remain as Leith Hill, and Pitch Hill, and Hindhead. On the lower slopes of the range, below the grassy spaces where the wild horses grazed, were forests of yew and sweet chestnut and elm, and the thickets and dark places hid the grizzly bear and the hyæna, and the grey apes clambered through the branches. And still lower amidst the woodland and marsh and open grass along

the Wey did this little drama play itself out to the end that I have to tell Fifty thousand years ago it was fifty thousand years—if the reckoning of geo o s is correct

And in those days the spring time was as jo u as it is now, and sent the blood coursing in just the same fashion The afternoon sky was blue with piled white clouds sailing through it and the southwest wind came like a soft caress The new-come swallows drove to and fro The reaches of the river were spangled with white ranunculus, the marshy places were starred with lady's-smock and lit with marshmallow wherever the regiments of the sedges lowered their swords and the northward moving hippopotami shiny black monsters, sporting clumsily came floundering and blundering through it all, rejoicing dimly and possessed with one clear idea, *to splash the river muddy*

Up the river and well in sight of the hippopotami, a number of little buff coloured animals dabbled in the water There was no fear, no rivalry and no enmity b[illegible] am As the gre[illegible]

[illegible]

delicate down of hair [illegible] in the [illegible] and long in the arms And their ears had no lobes, and had little pointed tips, a thing that still, *in rare* instances, survives Stark naked vivid little gipsies, as active as monkeys and as full of chatter, though a little wanting in words

Their elders were hidden from the wallowing hippopotami by the crest of the knoll The human squatting-

place was a trampled area among the dead brown fronds of Royal Fern, through which the crosiers of this year's growth were unrolling to the light and warmth The fire was a smouldering heap of char, light grey and black, replenished by the old women from time to time with brown leaves Most of the men were asleep—they slept sitting with their foreheads on their knees They had killed that morning a good quarry, enough for all, a deer that had been wounded by hunting dogs so that there had been no quarrelling among them, and some of the women were still gnawing the bones that lay scattered about Others were making a heap of leaves and sticks to feed Brother Fire when the darkness came again, that he might grow strong and tall therewith, and guard them against the beasts And two were piling flints that they brought, an armful at a time, from the bend of the river where the children were at play

None of these buff skinned savages were clothed, but some wore about their hips rude girdles of adder skin or crackling undressed hide, from which depended little bags not made, but torn from the paws of beasts, and carrying the rudely dressed flints that were men's chief weapons and tools And one woman, the mate of Uya the Cunning Man, wore a wonderful necklace of perforated fossils—that others had worn before her Beside some of the sleeping man lay the big antlers of the elk with the tines chipped to sharp edges, and long sticks hacked at the ends with flints into sharp points There was little else save these things and the smouldering fire to mark these human beings off from the wild animals that ranged the country But Uya the Cunning did not sleep, but sat with a bone in his hand and scraped busily thereon with a flint, a thing no animal would do He was the oldest man in the tribe beetle browed [illegible] beard and his cheeks were black with [illegible] his strength and

cunning he was master of the tribe, and his share was always the most and the best

Eudena had hidden herself among the alders, because she was afraid of Uya She was still a girl, and her eyes were bright and her smile pleasant to see He had given her a piece of the liver, a man's piece, and a wonderful treat for a girl to get, but as she took it the other woman with the necklace had looked at her, an evil glance, and Ugh lomi had made a noise in his throat At that, Uya had looked at him long and steadfastly, and Ugh lomi's face had fallen And then Uya had looked at her She was frightened and she had stolen away, while the feeding was still going on, and Uya was busy with the marrow of a bone Afterwards he had wandered about as if looking for her And now she crouched among the alders, wondering mightily what Uya might be doing with the flint and the bone And Ugh lomi was not to be seen

Presently a squirrel came leaping through the alders, and she lay so quiet the little man was within six feet of her before he saw her Whereupon he dashed up a stem in a hurry and began to chatter and scold her "What are you doing here," he asked, "away from the other men beasts?" "Peace," said Eudena, but he only chattered more, and then she began to break off the little black cones to throw at him He dodged and defied her, and she grew excited and rose up to throw better, and then she saw Uya coming down the knoll He had seen the movement of her pale arm amidst the thicket—he was very keen eyed

At that she forgot the squirrel and set off through the alders and reeds as fast as she could go She did not care where she went so long as she escaped Uya She splashed nearly knee deep through a swampy place, and saw in front of her a slope of ferns—growing more slender and green as they passed up out of the light into the shade of the young chestnuts She was soon amidst the trees—she was very fleet of foot, and she

ran on and on until the forest was old and the vales great, and the vines about their stems where the light came were thick as young trees, and the ropes of ivy stout and tight On she went, and she doubled and doubled again, and then at last lay down amidst some ferns in a hollow place near a thicket, and listened with her heart beating in her ears

She heard footsteps presently rustling among the dead leaves, far off, and they died away and everything was still again, except the scandalising of the midges—for the evening was drawing on—and the incessant whisper of the leaves She laughed silently to think the cunning Uya should go by her She was not frightened Sometimes, playing with the other girls and lads, she had fled into the wood, though never so far as this It was pleasant to be hidden and alone

She lay a long time there, glad of her escape, and then she sat up listening

It was a rapid pattering growing louder and coming towards her, and in a little while she could hear grunting noises and the snapping of twigs It was a drove of lean grisly wild swine She turned about her, for a boar is an ill fellow to pass too closely, on account of the sideway slash of his tusks, and she made off slantingly through the trees But the patter came nearer, they were not feeding as they wandered, but going fast—or else they would not overtake her—and she caught the limb of a tree, swung on to it, and ran up the stem with something of the agility of a monkey

Down below the sharp bristling backs of the swine were already passing when she looked And she knew the short, sharp grunts they made meant fear What were they afraid of? A man? They were in a great hurry for just a man

And then, so suddenly it made her grip on the branch tighten involuntarily, a fawn started in the brake and rushed after the swine Something else went by, low and grey, with a long body, she did not know

what it was, indeed she saw it only momentarily through the interstices of the young leaves, and then there came a pause

She remained stiff and expectant, as rigid almost as though she was a part of the tree she clung to, peering down

Then, far away among the trees, clear for a moment, then hidden, then visible knee-deep in ferns, then gone again, ran a man She knew it was young Ugh lomi by the fair colour of his hair, and there was red upon his face Somehow his frantic flight and that scarlet mark made her feel sick And then nearer, running heavily and breathing hard, came another man At first she could not see, and then she saw, foreshortened and clear to her, Uya, running with great strides and his eyes staring He was not going after Ugh lomi His face was white It was Uya—*afraid!* He passed,

see him clearly now, but she knew at once it was the Terror of the Woodshade His name was a legend, the children would frighten one another, frighten even themselves with his name, and run screaming to the squatting place No man had ever killed any of his kind Even the mighty mammoth feared his anger It was the grizzly bear, the lord of the world as the world went then

As he ran he made a continuous growling grumble "Men in my very lair! Fighting and blood At the very mouth of my lair Men, men men Fighting and blood" For he was the lord of the wood and of the caves

Long after he had passed she remained, a girl of stone, staring down through the branches All her

power of action had gone from her She gripped by instinct with hands and knees and feet It was some time before she could think, and then only one thing was clear in her mind that the Terror was between her and the tribe—that it would be impossible to descend

Presently when her fear was a little abated she clambered into a more comfortable position, where a great branch forked The trees rose about her, so that she could see nothing of Brother Fire, who is black by day Birds began to stir, and things that had gone into hiding for fear of her movements crept out

After a time the taller branches flamed out at the touch of the sunset High overhead the rooks, who were wiser than men, went cawing home to their squatting places among the elms Looking down, things were clearer and darker Eudena thought of going back to the squatting place, she let herself down some way, and then the fear of the Terror of the Wood shade came again While she hesitated a rabbit squealed dismally, and she dared not descend farther

The shadows gathered, and the deeps of the forest began stirring Eudena went up the tree again to be nearer the light Down below the shadows came out of their hiding places and walked abroad Overhead the blue deepened A dreadful stillness came, and then the leaves began whispering

Eudena shivered and thought of Brother Fire

The shadows now were gathering in the trees, they sat on the branches and watched her Branches and leaves were turned to ominous quiet black shapes that would spring on her if she stirred Then the white owl, flitting silently, came ghostly through the shades Darker grew the world and darker, until the leaves and twigs against the sky were black, and the ground was hidden

She remained there all night, an age long vigil, straining her ears for the things that went on below in the darkness, and keeping motionless lest some stealthy

beast should discover her Man in those days was never alone in the dark, save for such rare accidents as this Age after age he had learnt the lesson of its terror—a lesson we poor children of his have nowadays painfully to unlearn Eudena, though in age a woman, was in heart like a little child She kept as still, poor little animal, as a hare before it is started

The stars gathered and watched her—her one grain of comfort In one bright one she fancied there was something like Ugh lomi Then she fancied it *was* Ugh lomi And near him, red and duller, was Uya, and as the night passed Ugh lomi fled before him up the sky

She tried to see Brother Fire who guarded the squatting place from beasts, but he was not in sight And far away she heard the mammoths trumpeting as they went down to the drinking place, and once some huge bulk with heavy paces hurried along, making a noise like a calf, but what it was she could not see But she thought from the voice it was Yaaa the rhinoceros, who stabs with his nose, goes always alone, and rages without cause

At last the little stars began to hide, and then the larger ones It was like all the animals vanishing before the Terror The Sun was coming, lord of the sky, as the grizzly was lord of the forest Eudena wondered what would happen if one star stayed behind. And then the sky paled to the dawn

When the daylight came the fear of lurking things passed and she could descend She was stiff, but not so stiff as you would have been, dear young lady (by virtue of your upbringing), and as she had not been trained to eat at least once in three hours, but instead had often fasted three days, she did not feel uncomfortably hungry She crept down the tree very cautiously, and went her way stealthily through the wood, and not a squirrel sprang or deer started but the terror of the grizzly bear froze her marrow

Her desire was now to find her people again Her dread of Uya the Cunning was consumed by a greater dread of loneliness But she had lost her direction She had run heedlessly overnight, and she could not tell whether the squatting place was sunward or where it lay Ever and again she stopped and listened, and at last, very far away, she heard a measured chinking It was so faint even in the morning stillness that she could tell it must be far away But she knew the sound was that of a man sharpening a flint

Presently the trees began to thin out, and then came a regiment of nettles barring the way She turned aside and then she came to a fallen tree that she knew, with a noise of bees about it And so presently she was in sight of the knoll, very far off and the river under it, and the children and the hippopotami just as they had been yesterday, and the thin spire of smoke swaying in the morning breeze Far away by the river was the cluster of alders where she had hidden And at the sight of that the fear of Uya returned, and she crept into a thicket of bracken, out of which a rabbit scuttled, and lay awhile to watch the squatting place

The men were mostly out of sight, saving Wau, the flint chopper, and at that she felt safer They were away hunting food, no doubt Some of the women, too, were down in the stream, stooping intent, seeking mussels, crayfish and water snails, and at the sight of their occupation Eudena felt hungry She rose, and ran through the fern, designing to join them As she went she heard a voice among the bracken calling softly She stopped Then suddenly she heard a rustle behind her, and turning, saw Ugh lomi rising out of the fern There were streaks of brown blood and dirt on his face, and his eyes were fierce, and the white stone of Uya the white Fire Stone, that none but Uya dared to touch, was in his hand In a stride he was beside her, and gripped her arm He swung her about, and

thrust her before him towards the woods "Uya," he said, and waved his arms about She heard a cry, looked back, and saw all the women standing up, and two wading out of the stream Then came a nearer howling, and the old woman with the beard, who watched the fire on the knoll, was waving her arms and Wau, the man who had been chipping the flint, was getting to his feet The little children too were hurrying and shouting

"Come!" said Ugh lomi, and dragged her by the arm

She still did not understand

"Uya has called the death word," said Ugh lomi, and she glanced back at the screaming curve of figures, and understood

Wau and all the women and children were coming towards them, a scattered array of buff shock headed figures, howling, leaping, and crying Over the knoll two youths hurried Down among the ferns to the right came a man, heading them off from the wood Ugh lomi left her arm, and the two began running side by side leaping the bracken and stepping clear and wide Eudena, knowing her fleetness and the fleetness of Ugh lomi, laughed aloud at the unequal chase They were an exceptionally straight-limbed couple for those days

They soon cleared the open, and drew near the wood of chestnut trees again—neither afraid now because neither was alone They slackened their pace, already not excessive And suddenly Eudena cried and swerved aside, pointing, and looking up through the tree stems Ugh lomi saw the feet and legs of men running towards him Eudena was already running off at a tangent And as he too turned to follow her they heard the voice of Uya coming through the trees, and roaring out his rage at them

Then terror came in their hearts, not the terror that numbs, but the terror that makes one silent and swift.

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They were cut off now on two sides They were in a sort of corner of pursuit On the right hand, and near by them came the men swift and heavy, with bearded Uya, antler in hand, leading them, and on the left, scattered as one scatters corn, yellow dashes among the fern and grass, ran Wau and the women, and even the little children from the shallow had joined the chase The two parties converged upon them Off they went, with Eudena ahead

They knew there was no mercy for them There was no hunting so sweet to these ancient men as the hunting of men Once the fierce passion of the chase was lit, the feeble beginnings of humanity in them were thrown to the winds And Uya in the night had marked Ugh lomi with the death word Ugh lomi was the day s quarry the appointed feast

They ran straight—it was their only chance—taking whatever ground came in the way—a spread of sting ing nettles, an open glade, a clump of grass out *of which a hyæna fled snarling* Then woods again, long stretches of shady leaf mould and moss under the green trunks Then a stiff slope, tree clad, and long vistas of trees, a glade, a succulent green area of black mud, a wide open space again and then a clump of lacerat ing brambles with beast tracks through it Beh nd them the chase trailed out and scattered, with Uya ever at their heels Eudena kept the first place, run ning light and with her breath easy, for Ugh lomi carried the Fire Stone in his hand

It told on his pace—not at first, but after a time His footsteps behind her suddenly grew remote Glancing over her shoulder as they crossed another open space, Eudena saw that Ugh lomi was many yards behind her and Uya close upon him, with antler already raised in the air to strike him down Wau and the others were but just emerging from the shadow of the woods

Seeing Ugh lomi in peril, Eudena ran sideways look

ing back, threw up her arms and cried aloud, just as the antler flew And young Ugh lomi, expecting this and understanding her cry, ducked his head, so that the missile merely struck his scalp lightly, making but a trivial wound, and flew over him He turned forthwith, the quartzite Fire Stone in both hands, and hurled it straight at Uya's body as he ran loose from the throw Uya shouted, but could not dodge it It took him under the ribs, heavy and flat, and he reeled and went down without a cry Ugh lomi caught up the antler—one tine of it was tipped with his own blood—and came running on again with a red trickle just coming out of his hair

Uya rolled over twice, and lay a moment before he got up and then he did not run fast The colour of his face was changed Wau overtook him, and then others, and he coughed and laboured in his breath But he kept on

At last the two fugitives gained the bank of the river, where the stream ran deep and narrow, and they still had fifty yards in hand of Wau, the foremost pursuer, the man who made the smiting stones He carried one, a large flint, the shape of an oyster and double the size, chipped to a chisel edge, in either hand

They sprang down the steep bank into the stream, rushed through the water, swam the deep current in two or three strokes, and came out wading again, dripping and refreshed, to clamber up the farther bank It was undermined, and with willows growing thickly therefrom, so that it needed clambering And while Eudena was still among the silvery branches and Ugh lomi still in the water—for the antler had encumbered him—Wau came up against the sky on the opposite bank and the smiting stone, thrown cunningly, took the side of Eudena's knee She struggled to the top and fell

They heard the pursuers shout to one another, and Ugh lomi climbing to her and moving jerkily to mar

Wau's arm, felt the second smiting stone graze his ear, and heard the water splash below him

Then it was Ugh lomi the stripling, proved him self to have come to man's estate For running on, he found Eudena fell behind, limping, and at that he turned, and crying savagely and with a face terrible with sudden wrath and trickling blood, ran swiftly past her back to the bank, whirling the antler round his head And Eudena kept on, running stoutly still, though she must needs limp at every step, and the pain was already sharp

So that Wau, rising over the edge and clutching the straight willow branches, saw Ugh lomi towering over him, gigantic against the blue, saw his whole body swing round, and the grip of his hands upon the antler The edge of the antler came sweeping through the air, and he saw no more The water under the osiers whirled and eddied and went crimson six feet down the stream Uya following stopped knee high across the stream, and the man who was swimming turned about

The other men who trailed after—they were none of them very mighty men (for Uya was more cunning than strong, brooking no sturdy rivals)—slackened momentarily at the sight of Ugh lomi standing there above the willows bloody and terrible, between them and the halting girl with the huge antler waving in his hand It seemed as though he had gone into the water a youth and come out of it a man full grown

He knew what there was behind him A broad stretch of grass, and then a thicket, and in that Eudena could hide That was clear in his mind, though his thinking powers were too feeble to see what should happen thereafter Uya stood knee deep, undecided and unarmed His heavy mouth hung open showing his canine teeth, and he panted heavily His side was flushed and bruised under the hair The other man beside him carried a sharpened stick The rest of the

hunters came up one by one to the top of the bank, hairy long-armed men clutching flints and sticks. Two ran off along the bank down stream, and then clambered to the water, where Wau had come to the surface struggling weakly. Before they could reach him he went under again. Two others threatened Ugh-lomi from the bank.

He answered back, shouts, vague insults, gestures. Then Uya, who had been hesitating, roared with rage, and whirling his fists plunged into the water. His followers splashed after him.

Ugh-lomi glanced over his shoulder and found Eudena already vanished into the thicket. He would perhaps have waited for Uya, but Uya preferred to spar in the water below him until the others were beside him. Human tactics in those days, in all serious fighting, were the tactics of the pack. Prey that turned at bay they gathered around and rushed. Ugh-lomi felt the rush coming, and hurling the antler at Uya, turned about and fled.

When he halted to look back from the shadow of the thicket, he found only three of his pursuers had followed him across the river, and they were going back again. Uya, with a bleeding mouth, was on the farther side of the stream again, but lower down, and holding his hand to his side. The others were in the river dragging something to shore. For a time at least the chase was intermitted.

Ugh-lomi stood watching for a space, and snarled at the sight of Uya. Then he turned and plunged into the thicket.

In a minute, Eudena came hastening to join him, and they went on hand in hand. He dimly perceived the pain she suffered from the cut and bruised knee, and chose the easier ways. But they went on all that day, mile after mile, through wood and thicket, until at last they came to the chalk land, open grass with rare woods of beech, and the birch growing near water,

and they saw the Wealden mountains nearer, and groups of horses grazing together They went circumspectly, keeping always near thicket and cover, for this was a strange region—even its ways were strange Steadily the ground rose, until the chestnut forests spread wide and blue below them, and the Thames marshes shone silvery, high and far They saw no men, for in those days men were still only just come into this part of the world, and were moving but slowly along the river ways Towards evening they came on the river again but now it ran in a gorge, between high cliffs of white chalk that sometimes overhung it Down the cliffs was a scrub of birches and there were many birds there And high up the cliff was a little shelf by a tree whereon they clambered to pass the night

They had had scarcely any food, it was not the time of year for berries, and they had no time to go aside to snare or waylay They tramped in a hungry weary silence, gnawing at twigs and leaves But over the surface of the cliffs were a multitude of snails and in a bush were the freshly laid eggs of a little bird and then Ugh lomi threw at and killed a squirrel in a beech tree, so that at last they fed well Ugh lomi watched during the night, his chin on his knees and he heard young foxes crying hard by, and the noise of mammoths down the gorge, and the hyænas yelling and laughing far away It was chilly, but they dared not light a fire Whenever he dozed, his spirit went abroad, and straightway met with the spirit of Uya and they fought And always Ugh lomi was paralysed so that he could not smite nor run and then he would awake suddenly Eudena, too, dreamt evil things of Uya, so that they both awoke with the fear of him in their hearts and by the light of the dawn they saw a woolly rhinoceros go blundering down the valley

During the day they caressed one another and were glad of the sunshine, and Eudena's leg was so stiff she sat on the ledge all day Ugh lomi found great flints

sticking out of the cliff face, greater than any he had seen, and he dragged some to the ledge and began chipping, so as to be armed against Uya when he came again And at one he laughed heartily, and Eudena laughed, and they threw it about in derision It had a hole in it They stuck their fingers through it, it was very funny indeed Then they peeped at one another through it Afterwards, Ugh lomi got himself a stick, and thrusting by chance at this foolish flint the stick went in and stuck there He had rammed it in too tightly to withdraw it. That was still stranger—scarcely funny, terrible almost, and for a time Ugh lomi did not greatly care to touch the thing It was as if the flint had bit and held with its teeth But then he got familiar with the odd combination He swung it about, and perceived that the stick with the heavy stone on the end struck a better blow than anything he knew He went to and fro swinging it and striking with it, but later he tired of it and threw it aside In the afternoon he went up over the brow of the white cliff, and lay watching by a rabbit warren until the rabbits came out to play There were no men thereabouts and the rabbits were heedless He threw a smiting stone he had made and got a kill

That night they made a fire from flint sparks and bracken fronds and talked and caressed by it And in their sleep Uya's spirit came again and suddenly while Ugh lomi was trying to fight vainly, the foolish flint on the stick came into his hand, and he struck Uya with it, and behold! it killed him But afterwards came other dreams of Uya—for spirits take a lot of killing and he had to be killed again Then after that the stone would not keep on the stick He awoke tired and rather gloomy, and was sulky all the forenoon, in spite of Eudena's kindliness, and instead of hunting he sat chipping a sharp edge to the singular flint, and looking strangely at her Then he bound the

perforated flint on to the stick with strips of rabbit skin And afterwards he walked up and down the ledge, striking with it, and muttering to himself, and thinking of Uya It felt very fine and heavy in the hand

Several days, more than there was any counting in those days, five days, it may be, or six, did Ugh lomi and Eudena stay on that shelf in the gorge of the river, and they lost all fear of men, and their fire burnt redly of a night And they were very merry together; there was food every day, sweet-water, and no enemies Eudena's knee was well in a couple of days for those ancient savages had quick healing flesh Indeed, they were very happy

On one of those days Ugh lomi dropped a chunk of flint over the cliff He saw it fall, and go bounding across the river bank into the river, and after laughing and thinking it over a little he tried another This smashed a bush of hazel in the most interesting way They spent all the morning dropping stones from the ledge, and in the afternoon they discovered this new and interesting pastime was also possible from the cliff brow The next day they had forgotten this delight Or at least, it seemed they had forgotten

But Uya came in dreams to spoil the paradise Three nights he came fighting Ugh lomi In the morning after these dreams Ugh lomi would walk up and down, threatening him and swinging the axe, and at last came the night after Ugh lomi brained the otter, and they had feasted Uya went too far, Ugh lomi awoke, scowling under his heavy brows, and he took his axe, and extending his hand towards Eudena he bade her wait for him upon the ledge Then he clambered down the white declivity, glanced up once from the foot of it and flourished his axe and without looking back again went striding along the river bank until the overhanging cliff at the bend hid him

Two days and nights did Eudena sit alone by the

fire on the ledge waiting, and in the night the beasts howled over the cliffs and down the valley, and on the cliff over against her the hunched hyænas prowled black against the sky. But no evil thing came near her save fear. Once, far away, she heard the roaring of a lion, following the horses as they came northward over the grass lands with the spring. All that time she waited—the waiting that is pain.

And the third day Ugh-lomi came back, up the river. The plumes of a raven were in his hair. The first axe was red-stained, and had long dark hairs upon it, and he carried the necklace that had marked the favourite of Uya in his hand. He walked in the soft places, giving no heed to his trail. Save a raw cut below his jaw there was not a wound upon him. "Uya!" cried Ugh-lomi exultant, and Eudena saw it was well. He put the necklace on Eudena, and they ate and drank together. And after eating he began to rehearse the whole story from the beginning, when Uya had cast his eyes on Eudena, and Uya and Ugh-lomi, fighting in the forest, had been chased by the bear, eking out his scanty words with abundant pantomime, springing to his feet and whirling the stone axe round when it came to the fighting. The last fight was a mighty one, stamping and shouting, and once a blow at the fire that sent a torrent of sparks up into the night. And Eudena sat red in the light of the fire, gloating on him, her face flushed and her eyes shining, and the necklace Uya had made about her neck. It was a splendid time, and the stars that look down on us looked down on her, our ancestor—who has been dead now these fifty thousand years.

II.—*The Cave Bear*

In the days when Eudena and Ugh-lomi fled from the people of Uya towards the fir-clad mountains of the Weald, across the forests of sweet chestnut and the

grass clad chalkland, and hid themselves at last in the gorge of the river between the chalk cliffs men were few and their squatting places far between The nearest men to them were those of the tribe, a full day's journey down the river, and up the mountains there were none Man was indeed a newcomer to this part of the world in that ancient time coming slowly along the rivers generation after generation, from one squatting place to another, from the south westward And the animals that held the land, the hippopotamus and rhinoceros of the river valleys the horses of the grass plains, the deer and swine of the woods the grey apes in the branches, the cattle of the uplands, feared him but little—let alone the mammoths in the mountains and the elephants that came through the land in the summer time out of the south For why should they fear him, with but the rough, chipped flints that he had not learnt to haft and which he threw but ill and the poor spear of sharpened wood, as all the weapons he had against hoof and horn, tooth and claw?

Andoo the huge cave bear, who lived in the cave up the gorge, had never even seen a man in all his wise and respectable life until midway through one night, as he was prowling down the gorge along the cliff edge he saw the glare of Eudena's fire upon the ledge and Eudena red and shining and Ugh lomi, with a gigantic shadow mocking him upon the white cliff, going to and fro, shaking his mane of hair, and waving the axe of stone—the first axe of stone—while he chanted of the killing of Uya The cave bear was far up the gorge, and he saw the thing slanting ways and far off He was so surprised he stood quite still upon the edge, sniffing the novel odour of burning bracken, and wondering whether the dawn was coming up in the wrong place

He was the lord of the rocks and caves, was the cave bear as his slighter brother, the grizzly was lord

of the thick woods below, and as the dappled lion—the lion of those days was dappled—was lord of the thorn thickets, reed beds, and open plains. He was the greatest of all meat eaters—he knew no fear—none preyed on him, and none gave him battle; only the rhinoceros was beyond his strength. Even the mammoth shunned his country. This invasion perplexed him. He noticed these new beasts were shaped like monkeys, and sparsely hairy like young pigs. "Monkey and young pig," said the cave bear. "It might not be so bad. But that red thing that jumps, and the black thing jumping with it yonder! Never in my life have I seen such things before!"

He came slowly along the brow of the cliff towards them, stopping thrice to sniff and peer, and the reek of the fire grew stronger. A couple of hyænas also were so intent upon the thing below that Andoo, coming soft and easy, was close upon them before they knew of him or he of them. They started guiltily and went lurching off. Coming round in a wheel a hundred yards off, they began yelling and calling him names to revenge themselves for the start they had had. "Ya-ha!" they cried. "Who can't grub his own burrow? Who eats roots like a pig? ... Ya-ha!" for even in those days the hyæna's manners were just as offensive as they are now.

"Who answers the hyæna?" growled Andoo, peering through the midnight dimness at them, and then going to look at the cliff edge.

There was Ugh-lomi still telling his story, and the fire getting low, and the scent of the burning hot and strong.

Andoo stood on the edge of the chalk cliff for some time, shifting his vast weight from foot to foot, and swaying his head to and fro, with his mouth open, his ears erect and twitching, and the nostrils of his big black muzzle sniffing. He was very curious, was the cave bear, more curious than any of the bears

that five now, and the flickering fire and the incomprehensible movements of the man, let alone the intrusion into his indisputable province, stirred him with a sense of strange new happenings He had been after red deer fawn that night, for the cave bear was a miscellaneous hunter, but this quite turned him from that enterprise

"Ya ha!" yelled the hyænas behind "Ya ha ha!"

Peering through the starlight, Andoo saw there were now three or four going to and fro against the grey hillside "They will hang about me now all the night until I kill," said Andoo "Filth of the world!" And mainly to annoy them, he resolved to watch the red flicker in the gorge until the dawn came to drive the hyæna scum home And after a time they vanished, and he heard their voices, like a party of Cockney beanfeasters, away in the beech woods Then they came slinking near again Andoo yawned and went on along the cliff, and they followed Then he stopped and went back

It was a splendid night, beset with shining constellations, the same stars, but not the same constellations we know, for since those days all the stars have had time to move into new places Far away across the open space beyond where the heavy shouldered, lean bodied hyænas blundered and howled, was a beech wood, and the mountain slopes rose beyond, a dim mystery, until their snow capped summits came out white and cold and clear, touched by the first rays of the yet unseen moon It was a vast silence, save when the yell of the hyænas flung a vanishing discordance across its peace or when from down the hills the trumpeting of the new come elephants came faintly on the faint breeze And below now, the red flicker had dwindled and was steady, and shone a deeper red, and Ugh lomi had finished his story and was preparing to sleep, and Eudena sat and listened to the strange voices of unknown beasts, and watched the dark eastern

sky growing deeply luminous at the advent of the moon Down below, the river talked to itself, and things unseen went to and fro

After a time the bear went away, but in an hour he was back again Then, as if struck by a thought, he turned, and went up the gorge

The night passed, and Ugh lomi slept on The waning moon rose and lit the gaunt white cliff over head with a light that was pale and vague The gorge remained in a deeper shadow and seemed all the darker Then by imperceptible degrees, the day came stealing in the wake of the moonlight Eudena's eyes wandered to the cliff brow overhead once, and then again Each time the line was sharp and clear against the sky, and yet she had a dim perception of some thing lurking there The red of the fire grew deeper and deeper, grey scales spread upon it, its vertical column of smoke became more and more visible, and up and down the gorge things that had been unseen grew clear in a colourless illumination She may have dozed

Suddenly she started up from her squatting posi tion, erect and alert, scrutinising the cliff up and down

She made the faintest sound, and Ugh lomi too, light sleeping like an animal, was instantly awake He caught up his axe and came noiselessly to her side

The light was still dim, the world now all in black and dark grey, and one sickly star still lingered over head The ledge they were on was a little grassy space six feet wide, perhaps, and twenty feet long, sloping outwardly, and with a handful of St John's wort growing near the edge Below it the soft, white rock fell away in a steep slope of nearly fifty feet to the thick bush of hazel that fringed the river Down the river this slope increased, until some way off a thin grass held its own right up to the crest of the cliff Overhead, forty or fifty feet of rock into the great masses characteristic of chalk, but

end of the ledge a gully, a precipitous groove of dis coloured rock, slashed the face of the cliff, and gave a footing to a scrubby growth, by which Eudena and Ugh lomi went up and down

They stood as noiseless as startled deer, with every sense expectant For a minute they heard nothing, and then came a faint rattling of dust down the gully, and the creaking of twigs

Ugh lomi gripped his axe, and went to the edge of the ledge, for the bulge of the chalk overhead had hidden the upper part of the gully And forthwith, with a sudden contraction of the heart, he saw the cave bear half way down from the brow, and making a gingerly backward step with his flat hind foot His hind quarters were towards Ugh lomi, and he clawed at the rocks and bushes so that he seemed flattened against the cliff He looked none the less for that From his shining snout to his stumpy tail he was a lion and a half, the length of two tall men He looked over his shoulder, and his huge mouth was open with the exertion of holding up his great carcase, and his tongue lay out . .

He got his footing, and came down slowly, a yard nearer

Bear," said Ugh lomi looking round with his face white

But Eudena, with terror in her eyes, was pointing down the cliff

Ugh lomi's mouth fell open For down below with her big fore feet against the rock, stood another big brown grey bulk—the she bear She was not so big as Andoo, but she was big enough for all that

Then suddenly Ugh lomi gave a cry, and catching up a handful of the litter of ferns that lay scattered on the ledge, he thrust it into the pallid ash of the fire "Brother Fire!" he cried, "Brother Fire!" And Eudena, starting into activity, did likewise "Brother Fire! Help, help! Brother Fire!"

Brother Fire was still red in his heart, but he turned to grey as they scattered him "Brother Fire!" they screamed But he whispered and passed, and there was nothing but ashes Then Ugh lomi danced with anger and struck the ashes with his fist But Eudena began to hammer the firestone against a flint And the eyes of each were turning ever and again towards the gully by which Andoo was climbing down Brother Fire!

Suddenly the huge furry hind quarters of the bear came into view beneath the bulge of the chalk that had hidden him He was still clambering gingerly down the nearly vertical surface His head was yet out of sight but they could hear him talking to him self Pig and monkey," said the cave bear ' It ought to be good "

Eudena struck a spark and blew at it it twinkled brighter and then—went out At that she cast down flint and firestone and stared blankly Then she sprang to her feet and scrambled a yard or so up the cliff above the ledge How she hung on even for a moment I do not know, for the chalk was vertical and without grip for a monkey In a couple of seconds she had slid back to the ledge again with bleeding hands

Ugh lomi was making frantic rushes about the ledge —now he would go to the edge, now to the gully He did not know what to do, he could not think The she bear looked smaller than her mate—much If they rushed down on her together *one* might live "Ugh?" said the cave bear, and Ugh lomi turned again and saw his little eyes peering under the bulge of the chalk

Eudena cowering at the end of the ledge began to scream like a gripped rabbit

At that a sort of madness came upon Ugh lomi. With a mighty cry, he caught up his axe and ran towards Andoo The monster gave a grunt of surprise In a moment Ugh lomi was clinging to a bush right

underneath the bear, and in another he was hanging to its back half buried in fur, with one fist clutched in the hair under its jaw The bear was too astonished at this fantast c attack to do more than cling passive And then the axe, the first of all axes, rang on its skull

The bear s head twisted from side to side and he began a petulant scolding growl The axe bit within an inch of the left eye, and the hot blood blinded that side At that the brute roared with surprise and anger, and his teeth gnashed six inches from Ugh lomi s face Then the axe, clubbed close, came down heavily on the corner of the jaw

The next blow blinded the right side and called forth a roar, this time of pain Eudena saw the huge, flat feet slipping and sliding, and suddenly the bear gave a clumsy leap sideways, as if for the ledge Then everything vanished, and the hazels smashed and a roar of pain and a tumult of shouts and growls came up from far below

Eudena screamed and ran to the edge and peered over For a moment, man and bears were a heap together, Ugh lomi uppermost, and then he had sprung clear and was scaling the gully again, with the bears rolling and striking at one another among the hazels But he had left his axe below, and three knob ended streaks of carmine were shooting down his thigh "Up!" he cried, and in a moment Eudena was leading the way to the top of the cliff

In half a minute they were at the crest, their hearts pumping noisily, with Andoo and his wife far and safe below them Andoo was sitting on his haunches both paws at work, trying with quick exasperated movements to wipe the blindness out of his eyes and the she bear stood on all fours a little way off ruffled in appearance and growling angrily Ugh lomi flung himself flat on the grass and lay panting and bleeding with his face on his arms

For a second Eudena regarded the bears then she came and sat beside him, looking at him

Presently she put forth her hand timidly and touched him and made the guttural sound that was his name He turned over and raised himself on his arm His face was pale like the face of one who is afraid He looked at her steadfastly for a moment, and then suddenly he laughed "Waugh!" he said exultantly

"Waugh!" said she—a simple but expressive conversation

Then Ugh lomi came and knelt beside her, and on hands and knees peered over the brow and examined the gorge His breath was steady now and the blood on his leg had ceased to flow, though the scratches the she bear had made were open and wide He squatted up and sat staring at the footmarks of the great bear as they came to the gully—they were as wide as his head and twice as long Then he jumped up and went along the cliff face until the ledge was visible Here he sat down for some time thinking while Eudena watched him Presently she saw the bears had gone

At last Ugh lomi rose, as one whose mind is made up He returned towards the gully, Eudena keeping
close by hi
They took
lomi went
and found
as they could, and set off at a brisk walk The ledge was a home no longer, with such callers in the neighbourhood Ugh lomi carried the axe and Eudena the firestone So simple was a Palæolithic removal

They went up stream, although it might lead to the very lair of the cave bear, because there was no other way to go Down the stream was the tribe, and had not Ugh lomi killed Uya and Wau? By the stream they had to keep—because of drinking

So they marched through beech trees with the gorge

deepening until the river flowed, a frothing rapid, five hundred feet below them Of all the changeful things in this world of change, the courses of rivers in deep valleys change least It was the river Wey, the river we know to day, and they marched over the very spots where nowadays stand little Guildford and Godalming —the first human beings to come into the land Once a grey ape chattered and vanished and all along the cliff edge, vast and even, ran the spoor of the great cave bear

And then the spoor of the bear fell away from the cliff showing Ugh lomi thought, that he came from some place to the left, and keeping to the cliff's edge, they presently came to an end They found them selves looking down on a great semi circular space caused by the collapse of the cliff It had smashed right across the gorge, banking the up stream water back in a pool which overflowed in a rapid The slip had happened long ago It was grassed over, but the face of the cliffs that stood about the semicircle was still almost fresh looking and white as on the day when the rock must have broken and slid down Starkly exposed and black under the foot of these cliffs were the mouths of several caves And as they stood there, looking at the space, and disinclined to skirt it be cause they thought the bears' lair lay somewhere on the left in the direction they must needs take they saw suddenly first one bear and then two coming up the grass slope to the right and going across the amphitheatre towards the caves Andoo was first, he dropped a little on his fore foot and his men was despondent, and the she bear came shuffling behind

Eudena and Ugh lomi stepped back from the cliff until they could just see the bears over the verge Then Ugh lomi stopped Eudena pulled his arm but he turned with a forbidding gesture, and her hand dropped Ugh lomi stood watching the bears, with his axe in his hand, until they had vanished into the cave.

He growled softly, and shook the axe at the she bear's receding quarters Then to Eudena's terror, instead of creeping off with her, he lay flat down and crawled forward into such a position that he could just see the cave It was bears—and he did it as calmly as if it had been rabbits he was watching!

He lay still, like a bared log, sun dappled in the shadow of the trees He was thinking And Eudena had learnt, even when a little girl, that when Ugh lomi became still like that jaw bone on fist, novel things presently began to happen

It was an hour before the thinking was over, it was noon when the two little savages had found their way to the cliff brow that overhung the bears' cave And all the long afternoon they fought desperately with a great boulder of chalk, trundling it, with nothing but their unaided sturdy muscles, from the gully where it had hung like a loose tooth, towards the cliff top It was full two yards about, it stood as high as Eudena's waist it was obtuse angled and toothed with flints And when the sun set it was poised, three inches from the edge, above the cave of the great cave bear

In the cave conversation languished during that after noon The she bear snoozed sulkily in her corner—for she was fond of pig and monkey—and Andoo was busy licking the side of his paw and smearing his face to cool the smart and inflammation of his wounds Afterwards he went and sat just within the mouth of the cave blinking out at the afternoon sun with his uninjured eye and thinking

"I never was so startled in my life," he said at last "They are the most extraordinary beasts Attacking *me!*

"I don't like them," said the she bear, out of the darkness behind

"A feebler sort of beast I *never* saw I can't think what *the world is coming to Scraggy, weedy legs* Wonder how they keep warm in winter?"

"Very likely they don't," said the she bear

"I suppose it's a sort of monkey gone wrong"

"It's a change," said the she bear

A pause

"The advantage he had was merely accidental," said Andoo "These things *will* happen at times"

"*I* can't understand why you let go," said the she bear

That matter had been discussed before, and settled So Andoo, being a bear of experience, remained silent for a space Then he resumed upon a different aspect of the matter "He has a sort of claw—a long claw that he seemed to have first on one paw and then on the other Just one claw They're very odd things The bright thing, too, they seemed to have—like that glare that comes in the sky in daytime—only it jumps about—it's really worth seeing It's a thing with a root, too—like grass when it is windy"

"Does it bite?" asked the she bear "If it bites it can't be a plant"

"No——I don't know," said Andoo "But it's curious, anyhow"

"I wonder if they *are* good eating?" said the she bear

"They look it," said Andoo, with appetite—for the cave bear, like the polar bear, was an incurable carnivore—no roots or honey for *him*

The two bears fell into a meditation for a space Then Andoo resumed his simple attentions to his eye The sunlight up the green slope before the cave mouth grew warmer in tone and warmer, until it was a ruddy amber

"Curious sort of thing—day," said the cave bear "Lot too much of it, I think Quite unsuitable for hunting Dazzles me always I can't smell nearly so well by day"

The she bear did not answer, but there came a meas[illegible] crunching sound out of the darkness Sh-

had turned up a bone Andoo yawned "Well," he said He strolled to the cave mouth and stood with his head projecting, surveying the amphitheatre He found he had to turn his head completely round to see objects on his right hand side No doubt that eye would be all right to morrow

He yawned again There was a tap overhead, and a big mass of chalk flew out from the cliff face, dropped a yard in front of his nose, and starred into a dozen unequal fragments It startled him extremely

When he had recovered a little from his shock, he went and sniffed curiously at the representative pieces of the fallen projectile They had a distinctive flavour, oddly reminiscent of the two drab animals of the ledge He sat up and pawed the larger lump, and walked round it several times, trying to find a man about it somewhere

When night had come he went off down the river gorge to see if he could cut off either of the ledge's occupants The ledge was empty, there were no signs of the red thing but as he was rather hungry he did not loiter long that night, but pushed on to pick up a red deer fawn He forgot about the drab animals He found a fawn but the doe was close by and made an ugly fight for her young Andoo had to leave the fawn, but as her blood was up she stuck to the attack, and at last he got in a blow of his paw on her nose, and so got hold of her More meat but less delicacy, and the she bear, following, had her share The next afternoon, curiously enough, the very fellow of the first white rock fell, and smashed precisely according to precedent

The aim of the third, that fell the night after, however, was better It hit Andoo's unspeculative skull with a crack that echoed up the cliff, and the white fragments went dancing to all the points of the com pass The she bear coming after him and sniffing curiously at him, found him lying in an odd sort of

attitude, with his head wet and all out of shape She was a young she bear, and inexperienced and having sniffed about him for some time and licked him a little and so forth, she decided to leave him until the odd mood had passed, and went on her hunting alone

She looked up the fawn of the red doe they had killed two nights ago and found it But it was lonely hunting without Andoo, and she returned caveward before dawn The sky was grey and overcast, the trees up the gorge were black and unfamiliar, and into her ursine mind came a dim sense of strange and dreary happenings She lifted up her voice and called Andoo by name The sides of the gorge re echoed her

As she approached the caves she saw in the half l ght, and heard a couple of jackals scuttle off, and immediately after a hyæna howled and a dozen clumsy bulks went lumbering up the slope, and stopped and yelled derision "Lord of the rocks and caves—ya ha!" came down the wind The dismal feeling in the she bear's mind be came suddenly acute She shuffled across the amphi theatre

"Ya ha!" said the hyænas, retreating "Ya ha!"

The cave bear was not lying quite in the same atti tude, because the hyænas had been busy, and in one place his ribs showed white Dotted over the turf about him lay the smashed fragments of the three great lumps of chalk And the air was full of the scent of death

The she-bear stopped dead Even now, that the great and wonderful Andoo was killed was beyond her believing Then she heard far overhead a sound, a queer sound, a little like the shout of a hyæna but fuller and lower in pitch She looked up, her little dawn blinded eyes seeing little, her nostrils quivering And there, on the cliff edge, far above her against the bright pink of dawn, were two little shaggy round dark things, the heads of Eudena and Ugh lomi, as they

shouted derision at her But though she could not see them very distinctly she could hear and dimly she began to apprehend A novel feeling as of imminent *strange evils came into her heart*

She began to examine the smashed fragments of chalk that lay about Andoo For a space she stood still, looking about her and making a low continuous sound that was almost a moan Then she went back incredulously to Andoo to make one last effort to rouse him

III—The First Horseman

In the days before Ugh l mi there was little trouble between the horses and men They lived apart—the men in the river swamps and thickets the horses on the wide grassy uplands between the chestnuts and the pines Sometimes a pony would come straying into the clogging marshes to make a flint hacked meal, and sometimes the tribe would find one, the kill of a lion, and drive off the jackals and feast heartily while the sun was high. These horses of the old time were clumsy at the fetlock and dun-coloured, with a rough tail and big head They came every spring time northward into the country after the swallows and before the hippopotami, as the grass on the wide downland stretches grew long They came only in small bodies thus far each herd a stallion and two or three mares and a foal or so, having its own stretch of country, and they went again when the chestnut trees were yellow and the wolves came down the Wealden mountains

It was their custom to graze right out in the open, going into cover only in the heat of the day They avoided the long stretches of thorn and beechwood, preferring an isolated group of trees void of ambuscade, so that it was hard to come upon them They were never fighters, their heels and teeth were for one another but in the clear country, once they were

started, no living thing came near them, though perhaps the elephant might have done so had he felt the need And in those days man seemed a harmless thing enough No whisper of prophetic intelligence told the species of the terrible slavery that was to come, of the whip and spur and bearing rein, the clumsy load and the slippery street, the insufficient food and the knacker's yard that was to replace the wide grass land and the freedom of the earth

Down in the Wey marshes Ugh lomi and Eudena had never seen the horses closely, but now they saw them every day as the two of them raided out from their lair on the ledge in the gorge, raiding together in search of food They had returned to the ledge after the killing of Andoo, for of the she bear they were not afraid The she bear had become afraid of them, and when she winded them she went aside The two went together everywhere, for since they had left the tribe Eudena was not so much Ugh lomi s woman as his mate, she learnt to hunt even—as much, that is as any woman could She was indeed a marvel ous woman He would lie for hours watching a beast, or planning catches in that shock head of his, and she would stay beside him, with her bright eyes upon him offering no irritating suggestions—as still as any man A wonderful woman!

At the top of the cliff was an open grassy lawn and then beechwoods, and going through the beechwoods one came to the edge of the rolling grassy expanse and in sight of the horses Here, on the edge of the wood and bracken were the rabbit burrows, and here among the fronds Eudena and Ugh lomi would lie with their throwing stones ready, until the little people came out to nibble and play in the sunset And while Eudena would sit a silent figure of watchfulness regarding the burrows, Ugh lomi s eyes were ever away across the greensward at those wonderful grazing strangers

In a dim way he appreciated their grace and their supple nimbleness As the sun declined in the evening-time, and the hea[illegible]he day passed, they would become active [illegible] chasing one another, neighing, dodging, shaking their manes, coming round in great curves, sometimes so close that the pounding of the turf sounded like hurried thunder It looked so fine that Ugh lomi wanted to [illegible]oin in badly And sometimes one would roll over on the turf, kicking four hoofs heavenward which seemed formidable and was certainly much less alluring

Dim imaginings ran through Ugh lomi's mind as he watched—by virtue of which two rabbits lived the longer And sleeping his brains were clearer and bolder—for that was the way in those days He came near the horses he dreamt, and fought, smiting stone against hoof but then the horses changed to men, or, at least, to men with horses heads, and he awoke in a cold sweat of terror

Yet the next day in the morning, as the horses were grazing, one of the mares whinnied, and they [illegible] Ugh lomi coming up the wind They all [illegible] their eating and watched him Ugh lomi was [illegible] coming towards them, but strolling obliquely [illegible] the open, looking at anything in the world but [illegible] He had stuck three fern fronds into the mat [illegible] hair, giving him a remarkable appearance, and [illegible] very slowly "What's up now?" said the Master [illegible] who was capable, but inexperienced

"It looks more like the first half of an [illegible] anything else in the world," he said "Fore [illegible] no hind"

"It's only one of those pink monkey [illegible] the Eldest Mare "They're a sort of [illegible] They're quite common on the plains"

Ugh lomi continued his oblique [illegible] Eldest Mare was struck with the want [illegible] his proceedings

"Fool!" said the Eldest Mare, in a quick conclusive way she had She resumed her grazing The Master Horse and the Second Mare followed suit

'Look! he's nearer," said the Foal with a stripe

One of the younger foals made uneasy movements Ugh lomi squatted down, and sat regarding the horses fixedly In a little while he was satisfied that they meant neither flight nor hostilities He began to consider his next procedure He did not feel anxious to kill, but he had his axe with him, and the spirit of sport was upon him How would one kill one of these creatures?—these great beautiful creatures!

Eudena, watching him with a fearful admiration from the cover of the bracken, saw him presently go on all fours, and so proceed again But the horses preferred him a biped to a quadruped and the Master Horse threw up his head and gave the word to move Ugh lomi thought they were off for good, but after a minute's gallop they came round in a wide curve, and stood winding him Then, as a rise in the ground hid him they tailed out, the Master Horse leading and approached him spirally

He was as ignorant of the possibilities of a horse as they were of his And at this stage it would seem he funked He knew this kind of stalking would make red deer or buffalo charge, if it were persisted in At any rate Eudena saw him jump up and come walking towards her with the fern plumes held in his hand

She stood up, and he grinned to show that the whole thing was an immense lark, and that what he had done was just what he had planned to do from the very beginning So that incident ended But he was very thoughtful all that day

The next day this foolish drab creature with the leonine mane, instead of going about the grazing or hunting he was made for was prowling round the horses again The Eldest Mare was all for silent contempt "I suppose he wants to learn something from us" she

said and "*Let* him" The next day he was at it again The Master Horse decided he meant absolutely nothing But as a matter of fact, Ugh lomi, the first of men to feel that curious spell of the horse that binds us even to this day, meant a great deal He admired them unreservedly There was a rudiment of the snob in him, I am afraid, and he wanted to be near these beautifully curved animals Then there were vague conceptions of a kill If only they would let him come near them! But they drew the line, he found, at fifty yards If he came nearer than that they moved off—with dignity I suppose it was the way he had blinded Andoo that made him think of leaping on the back of one of them But though Eudena after a time came out in the open too, and they did some unobtrusive stalking, things stopped there

Then one memorable day a new idea came to Ugh lomi The horse looks down and level but he does not look up No animals look up—they have too much common sense It was only that fantastic creature, man could waste his wits skyward Ugh lomi made no philosophical deductions, but he perceived the thing was so So he spent a weary day in a beech that stood in the open while Eudena stalked Usually the horses went into the shade in the heat of the afternoon, but that day the sky was overcast, and they would not, in spite of Eudena's solicitude

It was two days after that that Ugh lomi had his desire The day was blazing hot, and the multiplying flies asserted themselves The horses stopped grazing before mid day, and came into the shadow below him, and stood in couples nose to tail, flapping

The Master Horse, by virtue of his heels came closest to the tree And suddenly there was a rustle and a creak, a *thud* Then a sharp chipped flint bit him on the cheek The Master Horse stumbled, came on one knee, rose to his feet, and was off like the wind The air was full of the whirl of limbs, the

aware of an eye and teeth He whipped his leg into a position of security, and hit at the cheek with his fist Then the head went down somewhere out of existence apparently, and the back he was sitting on flew up into a dome Ugh lomi became a thing of instinct again—strictly prehensile, he held by knees and feet, and his head seemed sliding towards the turf His fingers were twisted into the shock of mane, and the rough hair of the horse saved him The gradient he was on lowered again, and then—"Whup!" said Ugh lomi astonished, and the slant was the other way up But Ugh lomi was a thousand generations nearer the primordial than man no monkey could have held on better And the lion had been training the horse for countless generations against the tactics of rolling and rearing back But he kicked like a master, and buck jumped rather neatly In five minutes Ugh lomi lived a lifetime If he came off the horse would kill him, he felt assured

Then the Master Horse decided to stick to his old tactics again, and suddenly went off at a gallop He headed down the slope taking the steep places at a rush, swerving neither to the right nor to the left, and, as they rode down, the wide expanse of valley sank out of sight behind the approaching skirmishers of oak and hawthorn They skirted a sudden hollow with the pool of a spring, rank weeds and silver bushes The ground grew softer and the grass taller, and on the right hand side and the left came scattered bushes of May—still splashed with belated blossom Presently the bushes thickened until they lashed the passing rider, and little flashes and gouts of blood came out on horse and man Then the way opened again

And then came a wonderful adventure A sudden squeal of unreasonable anger rose amidst the bushes, he squeal of some creature bitterly wronged And crashing after them appeared a big, grey blue shape It was Yaaa, the big-horned rhinoceros, in one of those

fits of fury of his, charging full tilt, after the manner of his kind He had been startled at his feeding, and someone, it did not matter who, was to be ripped and trampled therefor He was bearing down on them from the left, with his wicked little eye red, his great horn down and his tail like a jury mast behind him For a minute Ugh lomi was minded to slip off and dodge, and then behold! the staccato of the hoofs grew swifter and the rhinoceros and his stumpy hurrying little legs seemed to slide out at the back corner of Ugh lomi's eye In two minutes they were through the bushes of May, and out in the open, going fast For a space he could hear the ponderous paces in pursuit receding behind him, and then it was just as if Yaaa had not lost his temper, as if Yaaa had never existed

The pace never faltered, on they rode and on

Ugh lomi was now all exultation To exult in those days was to insult "Ya ha! big nose!" he said, trying to crane back and see some remote speck of a pursuer "Why don't you carry your smiting stone in your fist?" he ended with a frantic whoop

But that whoop was unfortunate, for coming close to the ear of the horse, and being quite unexpected, it startled the stallion extremely He shied violently Ugh lomi suddenly found himself uncomfortable again He was hanging on to the horse, he found, by one arm and one knee

The rest of the ride was honourable but unpleasant The view was chiefly of blue sky, and that was combined with the most unpleasant physical sensations Finally, a bush of thorn lashed him and he let go

He hit the ground with his cheek and shoulder, and then, after a complicated and extraordinarily rapid movement, hit it again with the end of his backbone He saw splashes and sparks of light and colour The ground seemed bouncing about just like the horse had done Then he found he was sitting on turf, six yards beyond the bush In front of him was a space

of grass, growing greener and greener, and a number of human beings in the distance, and the horse was going round at a smart gallop quite a long way off to the right

The human beings were on the opposite side of the river, some still in the water, but they were all running away as hard as they could go The advent of a monster that took to pieces was not the sort of novelty they cared for For quite a minute Ugh lomi sat regarding them in a purely spectacular spirit The bend of the river the knoll among the reeds and royal ferns the thin streams of smoke going up to Heaven were all perfectly familiar to him It was the squatting place of the Sons of Uya, of Uya from whom he had fled with Eudena and whom he had waylaid in the chestnut woods and killed with the First Axe

He rose to his feet, still dazed from his fall and as he did so the scattering fugitives turned and regarded him Some pointed to the receding horse and chattered He walked slowly towards them, staring He forgot the horse, he forgot his own bruises in the growing interest of this encounter There were fewer of them than there had been—he supposed the others must have hid—the heap of fern for the night fire was not so high By the flint heaps should have sat Wau—but then he remembered he had killed Wau Suddenly brought back to this familiar scene, the gorge and the bears and Eudena seemed things remote things dreamt of

He stopped at the bank and stood regarding the tribe His mathematical abilities were of the slightest, but it was certain there were fewer The men might be away but there were fewer women and children He gave the shout of *home coming* His quarrel had been with Uya and Wau—not with the others "Children of Uya!" he cried They answered with his name a little fearfully because of the strange way he had come

For a space they spoke together Then an old woman lifted a shrill voice and answered him "Our Lord is a Lion"

Ugh lomi did not understand that saying They answered him again several together, "Uya comes again He comes as a Lion Our Lord is a Lion He comes at night He slays whom he will But none other may slay us, Ugh lomi, none other may slay us"

Still Ugh lomi did not understand

"Our Lord is a Lion He speaks no more to men"

Ugh lomi stood regarding them He had had dreams —he knew that though he had killed Uya, Uya still existed And now they told him Uya was a Lion

The shrivelled old woman, the mistress of the fire minders suddenly turned and spoke softly to those next to her She was a very old woman indeed, she had been the first of Uya's wives, and he had let her live beyond the age to which it is seemly a woman should be permitted to live She had been cunning from the first, cunning to please Uya and to get food And now she was great in counsel She spoke softly, and Ugh lomi watched her shrivelled form across the river with a curious distaste Then she called aloud, "Come over to us, Ugh lomi"

A girl suddenly lifted up her voice "Come over to us, Ugh lomi" she said And they all began crying, "Come over to us, Ugh lomi"

It was strange how their manner changed after the old woman called

He stood quite still watching them all It was pleasant to be called, and the girl who had called first was a pretty one But she made him think of Eu lena

"Come over to us Ugh lomi," they cried, and the voice of the shrivelled old woman rose above them all At the sound of her voice his hesitation returned

He stood on the river bank, Ugh lomi—Ugh the Thinker — with his thoughts slowly taking shape Presently one and then another paused to see what

he would do He was minded to go back, he was minded not to Suddenly his fear or his caution got the upper hand Without answering them he turned and walked back towards the distant thorn trees, the way he had come Forthwith the whole tribe s arted crying to him again very eagerly He hesitated and turned, then he went on, then he turned again, and then once again, regarding them with troubled eyes as they called The last time he took two paces back before his fear stopped him They saw l im stop once more, and suddenly shake his head and vanish among the hawthorn trees

Then all the women and children lifted up their voices together, and called to him in one last vain effort

Far down the river the reeds were stirring in the breeze, where convenient for his new sort of feeding, the old lion, who had taken to man eating had made his lair

The old woman turned her face that way, and pointed to the hawthorn thickets "Uya," she screamed "there goes thine enemy! There goes thine enemy Uya! Why do you devour us nightly? We have tried to snare him! There goes thine enemy Uya!"

But the lion who preyed upon the tribe was taking his siesta The cry went unheard That day he had dined on one of the plumper girls, and his mood was a comfortable placidity He really did not understand that he was Uya or that Ugh lomi was his enemy

So it was that Ugh lomi rode the horse, and heard first of Uya the lion, who had taken the place of Uya the Master and was eating up the tribe And as he hurried back to the gorge his mind was no longer full of the horse, but of the thought that Uya was still alive, to slay or be slain Over and over again he saw the shrunken band of women and children crying that Uya was a lion Uya was a lion!

And presently, fearing the twilight might come upon him, Ugh lomi began running

IV —Uya the Lion

The old lion was in luck The tribe had a certain pride in their ruler, but that was all the satisfaction they got out of it He came the very night that Ugh lomi killed Uya the Cunning, and so it was they named him Uya It was the old woman, the fire minder, who first named him Uya A shower had lowered the fires to a glow, and made the night dark And as they conversed together and peered at one another in the darkness and wondered fearfully what Uya would do to them in their dreams now that he was dead, they heard the mounting reverberations of the lion's roar close at hand Then everything was still

They held their breath, so that almost the only sounds were the patter of the rain and the hiss of the raindrops in the ashes And then after an interminable time a crash, and a shriek of fear, and a growling They sprang to their feet, shouting, screaming, running this way and that, but brands would not burn, and in a minute the victim was being dragged away through the ferns It was Irk, the brother of Wau

So the lion came

The ferns were still wet from the rain the next night and he came and took Click with the red hair That sufficed for two nights And then in the dark between the moons he came three nights, night after night and that though they had good fires He was an old lion with stumpy teeth, but very silent and very cool, he knew of fires before, these were not the first of mankind that had ministered to his old age The third night he came between the outer fire and *the inner, and he leapt the flint heap, and pulled down* Irm the son of Irk, who had seemed like to be the

leader That was a dreadful night, because they lit great flares of fern and ran screaming and the lion missed his hold of Irm By the glare of the fire they saw Irm struggle up, and run a little way towards them, and then the lion in two bounds had him down again That was the last of Irm

So fear came, and all the delight of spring passed out of their lives Already there were five gone out of the tribe, and four nights added three more to the number Food seeking became spiritless, none knew who might go next, and all day the women toiled, even the favourite women, gathering litter and sticks for the night fires And the hunters hunted ill in the warm spring time hunger came again as though it was still winter The tribe might have moved had they had a leader, but they had no leader and none knew where to go that the lion could not follow them So the old lion waxed fat and thanked heaven for the kindly race of men Two of the children and a youth died while the moon was still new, and then it was the shrivelled old fire minder first bethought herself in a dream of Eudena and Ugh lomi, and of the way Uya had been slain She had lived in fear of Uya all her days, and now she lived in fear of the lion That Ugh lomi could kill Uya for good—Ugh lomi whom she had seen born—was impossible It was Uya still seeking his enemy!

And then came the strange return of Ugh lomi, a wonderful animal seen galloping far across the river, that suddenly changed into two animals a horse and a man Following this portent, the vision of Ugh lomi on the farther bank of the river . Yes it was all plain to her Uya was punishing them, because they had not hunted down Ugh lomi and Eudena

The men came straggling back to the chances of the night while the sun was still golden in the sky They were received with the story of Ugh lomi She went across the river with them and showed them his spoor

hesitating on the farther bank Siss the Tracker knew the feet for Ugh lomi's "Uya needs Ugh lomi" cried the old woman standing on the left of the bend, a gesticulating figure of flaring bronze in the sunset Her cries were strange sounds flitting to and fro on the borderland of speech, but this was the sense they carried "The lion needs Eudena He comes night after night seeking Eudena and Ugh lomi When he cannot find Eudena and Ugh lomi he grows angry and he kills Hunt Eudena and Ugh lomi, Eudena whom he pursued and Ugh lomi for whom he gave the death word! Hunt Eudena and Ugh lomi!"

She turned to the distant reed bed, as sometimes she had turned to Uya in his life "Is it not so, my lord?" she cried And as if in answer, the tall reeds bowed before a breath of wind

Far into the twilight the sound of hacking was heard from the squatting places. It was the men sharpening their ashen *spears against the hunting of the morrow* And in the night, early before the moon rose, the lion came and took the girl of Siss the Tracker

In the morning before the sun had risen, Siss the Tracker, and the lad Wau hau, who now chipped flints and One Eye, and Bo, and the snail eater, the two red haired men, and Cat's skin and Snake, all the men that were left alive of the Sons of Uya, taking their ash spears and their smiting stones, and with throwing stones in the beast paw bags, started forth upon the trail of Ugh lomi through the hawthorn thickets where Yaaa the Rhinoceros and his brothers were feeding, and up the bare downland towards the beechwoods

That night the fires burnt high and fierce, as the waxing moon set, and the lion left the crouching women and children in peace

And the next day, while the sun was still high, the hunters returned—all save One Eye, who lay dead with a smashed skull at the foot of the ledge (When

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and she lay so still that for a moment the old woman feared she was dead And then her nostrils quivered. At that the old woman slapped her face and laughed and gave the spear to Siss again, and went a little way off from her and began to talk and jeer at her after her manner

The old woman had more words than any in the tribe And her talk was a terrible thing to hear Sometimes she screamed and moaned incoherently, and sometimes the shape of her guttural cries was the mere phantom of thoughts But she conveyed to Eudena, nevertheless, much of the things that were yet to come, of the Lion and of the torment he would do her "And Ugh lomi! Ha, ha! Ugh lomi is slain?"

And suddenly Eudena's eyes opened and she sat up again and her look met the old woman's fair and level "No' she said slowly, like one trying to re member ' I did not see my Ugh lomi slain I did not see my Ugh lomi slain"

' Tell her" cried the old woman "Tell her—he that killed him Tell her how Ugh lomi was slain"

She looked, and all the women and children there looked, from man to man

None answered her They stood shamefaced

"Tell her" said the old woman The men looked at one another

Eudena's face suddenly lit

"Tell her," she said "Tell her, mighty men Tell her the killing of Ugh lomi"

The old woman rose and struck her sharply across her mouth

"We could not find Ugh lomi," said Siss the Tracker, slowly "Who hunts two, kills none"

Then Eudena's heart leapt, but she kept her face hard It was as well, for the old woman looked at her sharply, with murder in her eyes

Then the old woman turned her tongue upon the men because they had feared to go on afte Ugh lon

She dreaded no one now Uya was slain She scolded them as one scolds children And tl ey scowled at her, and began to accuse one another Until suddenly S ss the Tracker raised his voice and bade her hold her peace

And so when the sun was setting they took Eudena and went—though their hearts sank within them—along the trail the old lion had made in the reeds All the men went together At one place was a gro p of alders and here they hastily bound Eudena where the lion might find her when he came abroad in the twi light, and having done so they hurried back until they were near the squatting place Then they stopped Siss stopped first and looked back again at the alders They could see her head even from the squatting place, a little black shock under the limb of the larger tree That was as well

All the women and children stood watching upon the crest of the mound And the old woman stood and screamed for the lion to take her whom he sought, and counselled him on the torments he might do her

Eudena was very weary now, stunned by beatings and fatigue and sorrow, and only the fear of the thing that was still to come upheld her The sun was broad and blood red between the stems of the distant chest nuts, and the west was all on fire, the e ening breeze had died to a warm tranquillity The air was full of midge swarms, the fish in the river hard by would leap at times and now and again a cockchafer would drone through the air Out of the corner of her eye Eudena could see a part of the squatting knoll, and little figures standing and staring at her And—a very little sound but very clear—she could hear the beating of the fire stone Dark and near to her and still was the reed fringed thicket of the lair

Presently the firestone ceased She looked for the sun and found he had gone, and overhead and grow ing brighter was the waxing moon She looked to-

wards the thicket of the lair, seeking shapes in the reeds, and then suddenly she began to wriggle and wriggle, weeping and calling upon Ugh lomi

But Ugh lomi was far away When they saw her head moving with her struggles, they shouted together on the knoll, and she desisted and was still And then came the bats, and the star that was like Ugh lomi crept out of its blue hiding place in the west She called to it, but softly, because she feared the lion And all through the coming of the twilight the thicket was still

So the dark crept upon Eudena, and the moon grew bright, and the shadows of things that had fled up the hillside and vanished with the evening came back to them short and black And the dark shapes in the thicket of reeds and alders where the lion lay, gathered, and a faint stir began there But nothing came out therefrom all through the gathering of the darkness

She looked at the squatting place and saw the fires glowing smoky red, and the men and women going to and fro The other way, over the river, a white mist was rising Then far away came the whimpering of young foxes and the yell of a hyæna

There were long gaps of aching waiting After a long time some animal splashed in the water, and seemed to cross the river at the ford beyond the lair, but what animal it was she could not see From the distant drinking pools she could hear the sound of splashing, and the noise of elephants—so still was the night

The earth was now a colourless arrangement of white reflections and impenetrable shadows, under the blue sky The silvery moon was already spotted with the filigree crests of the chestnut woods, and over the [illegible] The [illegible] figures [illegible] *for a* [illegible]

The night suddenly seemed full of movement She held her breath Things were passing—one, two, three—subtly sneaking shadows Jackals

Then a long waiting again

Then, asserting itself as real at once over all the sounds her mind had imagined, came a stir in the thicket then a vigorous movement There was a snap The reeds crashed heavily, once, twice, thrice, and then everything was still save a measured swishing She heard a low tremulous growl, and then everything was still again The stillness lengthened—would it never end? She held her breath, she bit her lips to stop screaming Then something scuttled through the undergrowth Her scream was involuntary She did not hear the answering yell from the mound

Immediately the thicket woke up to vigorous movement again She saw the grass stems waving in the light of the setting moon, the alders swaying She struggled violently—her last struggle But nothing came towards her A dozen monsters seemed rushing about in that little place for a couple of minutes, and then again came silence The moon sank behind the distant chestnuts and the night was dark

Then an odd sound, a sobbing panting that grew faster and fainter Yet another silence, and then dim sounds and the grunting of some animal

Everything was still again Far away eastwards an elephant trumpeted, and from the woods came a snarling and yelping that died away

In the long interval the moon shone out again between the stems of the trees on the ridge, sending two great bars of light and a bar of darkness across the reedy waste Then came a steady rustling a splash and the reeds swayed wider and wider apart And at last they broke open, cleft from root to crest . The end had come

She looked to see the thing that had come out of the reeds For a moment it seemed certainly the great

head and jaw she expected, and then it dwindled and changed *It was a dark low thing, that remained silent* but it was not the lion It became still—everything became still She peered It was like some gigantic frog, two limbs and a slanting body Its head moved about searching the shadows

A rustle, and it moved clumsily, with a sort of hop ping And as it moved it gave a low groan

The blood rushing through her veins was suddenly joy "*Ugh lomi!*" she whispered,

The thing stopped "*Eudena*" he answered softly with pain in his voice and peering into the alders

He moved a ain and came out of the shadow beyond the reeds into the moonlight All his body was covered with dark smears She saw he was dragging his legs, *and that he gripped his axe, the first axe, in one hand* In another moment he had struggled into the position of all fours and had staggered over to her "The lion," he said in a strange mingling of exultation and anguish "Wau!—I have slain a lion With my own hand Even as I slew the great bear" He moved to emphasise his words, and suddenly broke off with a faint cry For a space he did not move

"Let me free," whispered Eudena

He answered her no words but pulled h mself up from his crawling attitude by means of the alder stem, and hacked at her thongs with the sharp edge of his axe She heard him sob at each blow He cut away the thongs about her chest and arms, and then his hand dropped His chest struck against her shoulder and he slipped down beside her and lay still

But the rest of her release was easy Very hastily she freed herself She made one step from the tree, and her head was spinning Her last conscious move ment was towards him She reeled, and dropped Her hand fell upon his thigh It was soft and wet, and gave way under her pressure he cried o t at her touch, and writhed and lay still again

Presently a dark dog like shape came very softly through the reeds Then stopped dead and stood sniffing hesitated, and at last turned and slunk back into the shadows

Long was the time they remained there motionless, with the light of the setting moon shining on their limbs Very slowly, as slowly as the setting of the moon, did the shadow of the reeds towards the mound flow over them Presently their legs were hidden, and Ugh lomi was but a bust of silver The shadow crept to his neck, crept over his face, and so at last the dark ness of the night swallowed them up

The shadow became full of instinctive stirrings There was a patter of feet, and a faint snarling—the sound of a blow

There was little sleep that night for the women and children at the squatting place until they heard Eudena scream But the men were weary and sat dozing When Eudena screamed they felt assured of their safety, and hurried to get the nearest places to the fires The old woman laughed at the scream, and laughed again because Si, the little friend of Eudena whimpered Directly the dawn came they were all alert and look ng towards the alders They could see that Eudena had been taken They could not help feeling glad to think that Uya was appeased But across the minds of the men the thought of Ugh lomi fell like a shadow They could understand revenge, for the world was old in revenge, but they did not think of res ue Sud lenly a hyæna fled out of the thicket, and came galloping across the reed space His muzzle and paws were dark stained At that sight all the men shouted and clutched at throwing stones and ran towards him, for no animal is so pitiful a coward as the hyæna by day All men hated the hyæna because he preyed on children, and would come and bite when one was s eep ng on the edge of the squatting place And Cat's skin, throwing

fair and straight, hit the brute shrewdly on the flank, whereat the whole tribe yelled with delight

At the noise they made there came a flapping of *wings from the lair of the lion, and three white headed* vultures rose slowly and circled and came to rest amidst the branches of an alder, overlooking the lair "Our lord is abroad," said the old woman pointing "The vultures have their share of Eudena" For a space they remained there, and then first one and then another dropped back into the thicket

Then over the eastern woods and touching the whole world of life and colour, poured with the exaltation of a trumpet blast, the light of the rising sun At the sight of him the children shouted together, and clapped *their hands and began to race off towards the water* Only little Si lagged behind and looked wonderingly at the alders where she had seen the head of Eudena overnight

But Uya, the old lion was not abroad, but at home, and he lay very still, and a little on one side He was not in his lair, but a little way from it in a place of trampled grass Under one eye was a little wound, the feeble little bite of the first axe But all the ground beneath his chest was ruddy brown with a vivid streak, and in his chest was a little hole that had been made by Ugh lomi's stabbing spear Along his side and at his neck the vultures had marked their claims For so Ugh lomi had slain him, lying stricken under his paw and thrusting haphazard at his chest He had driven the spear in with all his strength and stabbed the giant to the heart So it was the reign of the lion, of the second incarnation of Uya the Master, came to an end

From the knoll the bustle of preparation grew the hacking of spears and throwing stones None spake the name of Ugh lomi for fear that it might bring him The men were going to keep together, close together, in the hunting for a day or so And their hunting was

to be Ugh lomi, lest instead he should come a hunting them

But Ugh lomi was lying very still and silent, outside the lion's lair, and Eudena squatted beside him, with the ash spear, all smeared with lion's blood, gripped in her hand

V—*The Fight in the Lion's Thicket*

Ugh lomi lay still, his back against an alder, and his thigh was a red mass terrible to see No civilised man could have lived who had been so sorely wounded but Eudena got him thorns to close his wounds, and squatted beside him day and night, smiting the flies from him with a fan of reeds by day, and in the night threatening the hyænas with the first axe in her hand and in a little while he began to heal It was high summer, and there was no rain Little food they had during the first two days his wounds were open In the low place where they hid were no roots nor little beasts, and the stream, with its water snails and fish was in the open a hundred yards away She could not go abroad by day for fear of the tribe, her brothers and sisters, nor by night for fear of the beasts, both on his account and hers So they shared the lion with the vultures But there was a trickle of water near by, and Eudena brought him plenty in her hands

Where Ugh lomi lay was well hidden from the tribe by a thicket of alders and all fenced about with bulrushes and tall reeds The dead lion he had killed lay near his old lair on a place of trampled reeds fifty yards away, in sight through the reed stems and the vultures fought each other for the choicest pieces and kept the jackals off him Very soon a cloud of flies that looked like bees hung over him and Ugh lomi could hear their humming And when Ugh lomi's flesh was already healing—and it was not many days before

that began—only a few bones of the lion remained scattered and shining white

For the most part Ugh lomi sat still during the day, looking before him at nothing sometimes he would mutter of the horses and bears and lions and some times he would beat the ground with the first axe and say the names of the tribe—he seemed to have no fear of bringing the tribe—for hours together But chiefly he slept, dreaming little because of his loss of blood and the slightness of his food During the short summer night both kept awake All the while the darkness lasted things moved about them, things they never saw by day For some nights the hyænas did not come, and then one moonless night near a dozen came and fought for what was left of the lion The night was a tumult of growling, and Ugh lomi and Eudena could hear the bones snap in their teeth But they knew the hyæna dare not attack any creature alive and awake, and so they were not greatly afraid

Of a daytime Eudena would go along the narrow path the old lion had made in the reeds until she was beyond the bend and then she would creep into the thicket and watch the tribe She would lie close by the alders where they had bound her to offer her up to the lion, and thence she could see them on the knoll by the fire, small and clear, as she had seen them that night But she told Ugh lomi little of what she saw, because she feared to bring them by their names For so they believed in those days that naming called

She saw the men prepare stabbing spears and throw ing stones on the morning after Ugh lomi had slain the lion, and go out to hunt him, leaving the women and children on the knoll Little they knew how near he was as they tracked off in single file towards the hills, with Siss the Tracker leading them And she watched the women and children after the men had gone gathering fern fronds and twigs for the night fire, and the boys and girls running and playing

together But the very old woman made her feel afraid Towards noon when most of the others were down at the stream by the bend, she came and stood on the hither side of the knoll, a gnarled brown figure, and gesticulated so that Eudena could scarce believe she was not seen Eudena lay like a hare in its form, with shining eyes fixed on the bent witch away there, and presently she dimly understood it was the lion the old woman was worshipping—the lion Ugh lomi had slain

And the next day the hunters came back weary, carrying a fawn, and Eudena watched the feast enviously And then came a strange thing She saw —distinctly she heard—the old woman shrieking and gesticulating and pointing towards her She was afraid, and crept like a snake out of sight again But presently curiosity overcame her and she was back at her spying place, and as she peered her heart stopped, for there were all the men, with their weapons in their hands, walking together towards her from the knoll

She dared not move lest her movement should be seen, but she pressed herself close to the ground The sun was low and the golden light was in the faces of the men She saw they carried a piece of rich red meat thrust through by an ashen stake *Presently they* stopped "Go on!" screamed the old woman Cat's-skin grumbled and they came on, searching the thicket with sun dazzled eyes "Here!" said Siss And they took the ashen stake with the meat upon it and thrust it into the ground "Uya!" cried Siss, "behold thy portion And Ugh lomi we have slain Of a truth we have slain Ugh lomi This day we slew Ugh lomi, and to-morrow we will bring his body to you" And the others repeated the words

They looked at each other and behind them and partly turned and began going back At first they walked half turned to the thicket then *facing the* mound they walked faster, looking over their shoulders then faster, soon they ran, it was a race at last until

they were near the knoll Then Siss, who was hindmost, was first to slacken his pace

The sunset passed and the twilight came the fires glowed red against the hazy blue of the distant chestnut trees, and the voices over the mound were merry Eudena lay scarcely stirring, looking from the mound to the meat and then to the mound She was hungry, but she was afraid. At last she crept back to Ugh-lomi

He looked round at the little rustle of her approach His face was in shadow "Have you got me some food?" he said

She said she could find nothing, but that she would seek further, and went back along the lion's path until she could see the mound again, but she could not bring herself to take the meat, she had the brute's instinct of a snare She felt very miserable

She crept back at last towards Ugh lomi and heard him stirring and moaning She turned back to the mound again, then she saw something in the darkness near the stake, and peering distinguished a jackal In a flash she was brave and angry, she sprang up, cried out, and ran towards the offering She stumbled and fell, and heard the growling of the jackal going off

When she arose only the ashen stake lay on the ground, the meat was gone So she went back, to fast through the night with Ugh lomi, and Ugh lomi was angry with her, because she had no food for him, but she told him nothing of the things she had seen

Two days passed and they were near starving, when the tribe slew a horse Then came the same ceremony, and a haunch was left on the ashen stake, but this time Eudena did not hesitate

By acting and words she made Ugh lomi understand, but he ate most of the food before he understood and then as her meaning passed to him he grew merry with his food "I am Uya," he said, "I am the Lion I am the *Great Cave Bear*, I who was only Ugh lomi

I am Wau the Cunning It is wel that they should feed me, for presently I will kill the n all"

Then Eudena s heart was light, a d she laughed with him and afterwards she ate what he had left of the horseflesh with gladness

After that it was he had a drea n, and the next day he made Eudena bring him the lion's teeth and claws —so much of them as she could find—and hack him a club of alder And he put the teeth and claws very cunningly into the wood so that the points were out ward Very long it took him, and he blunted two of the teeth hammering them in, and was very angry and threw the thing away, but afterwards he dragged him self to where he had thrown it and finished it—a club of a new sort set with teeth That day there was more meat for them both, an offering to the lion from the tribe

It was one day—more than a hand s fingers of days more than anyone had skill to count—after Ugh lomi had made the club, that Eudena while he was asleep was lying in the thicket watching the squatting place There had been no meat for three days And the old woman came and worshipped after her manner Now while the worshipped Eudena's little friend Si and another, the child of the first girl Siss had loved came over the knoll and stood regarding her skinny figure, and presently they began to mock her Eudena found this entertaining, but suddenly the old woman turned on them quickly and saw them For a moment she stood and they stood motionless, and then with a shriek of rage, she rushed towards them, and all three d s appeared over the crest of the knoll

Presently the children reappeared among the ferns beyond the shoulder of the hill Little Si ran first for she was an active girl, and the other child ran squeal ng with the old woman close upon her And over the knoll came Siss with a bone in his hand and Bo and Cat s skin obsequiously behind him each h l ng a piece

si food, and they laughed aloud and shouted to see the old woman so angry And with a shriek the child was caught and the old woman set to work slapping *and the child screaming, and it was very good after* dinner fun for them Little Si ran on a little way and stopped at last between fear and curiosity

And suddenly came the mother of the child, with hair streaming, panting, and with a stone in her hand, and the old woman turned about like a wild cat She was the equal of any woman, was the chief of the fire minders, in spite of her years, but before she could do anything Siss shouted to her and the clamour rose loud Other shock heads came into sight It seemed the whole tribe was at home and feasting But the old woman dared not go on wreaking herself on the child Siss befriended

Everyone made noises and called names—even little Si Abruptly the old woman let go of the child she had caught and made a swift run at Si for Si had no friends, and Si, realising her danger when it was almost upon her, made off headlong, with a faint cry of terror not heeding whither she ran, straight to the lair of the lion She swerved aside into the reeds presently, *realising now whither she went*

But the old woman was a wonderful old woman as active as she was spiteful, and she caught Si by the streaming hair within thirty yards of Eudena All the tribe now was running down the knoll and shouting and laughing ready to see the fun

Then something stirred in Eudena something that had never stirred in her before, and, thinking all of little Si and nothing of her fear, she sprang up from her ambush and ran swiftly forward The old woman did not see her for she was busy beating little Si's face with her hand, beating with all her heart, and suddenly something hard and heavy struck her cheek She went reeling and saw Eudena with flaming eyes and cheeks between her and little Si She shrieked with aston sh

ment and terror, and little Si, not understanding, set off towards the gaping tribe. They were quite close now, for the sight of Eudena had driven their fading fear of the lion out of their heads.

In a moment Eudena had turned from the cowering old woman and overtaken Si. "Si!" she cried, "Si!" She caught the child up in her arms as it stopped, pressed the nail-lined face to hers, and turned about to run towards her lair, the lair of the old lion. The old woman stood waist high in the reeds, and screamed foul things and inarticulate rage, but did not dare to intercept her, and at the bend of the path Eudena looked back and saw all the men of the tribe crying to one another and Siss coming at a trot along the lion's trail.

She ran straight along the narrow way through the reeds to the shady place where Ugh-lomi sat with his healing thigh, just awakened by the shouting and rubbing his eyes. She came to him, a woman, with little Si in her arms. Her heart throbbed in her throat. "Ugh-lomi!" she cried. "Ugh-lomi, the tribe comes!"

Ugh-lomi sat staring in stupid astonishment at her and Si.

She pointed with Si in one arm. She sought among her feeble store of words to explain. She could hear the men calling. Apparently they had stopped outside. She put down Si and caught up the new club with the lion's teeth, and put it into Ugh-lomi's hand, and ran three yards and picked up the first axe.

"Ah!" said Ugh-lomi, waving the new club, and suddenly he perceived the occasion and, rolling over, began to struggle to his feet.

He stood but clumsily. He supported himself by one hand against the tree, and just touched the ground gingerly with the toe of his wounded leg. In the other hand he gripped the new club. He looked at his healing thigh, and suddenly the reeds began whispering,

and ceased and whispered again, and coming cautiously along the track, bending down and holding his fire hardened stabbing stick of ash in his hand, appeared Siss He stopped dead, and his eyes met Ugh lomi's

Ugh lomi forgot he had a wounded leg He stood firmly on both feet Something trickled He glanced down and saw a little gout of blood had oozed out along the edge of the healing wound He rubbed his hand there to give him the grip of his club, and fixed his eyes again on Siss

"Wau!" he cried, and sprang forward, and Siss, still stooping and watchful, drove his stabbing stick up very quickly in an ugly thrust It ripped Ugh lomi's guarding arm and the club came down in a counter that Siss was never to understand He fell, as an ox falls to the pole axe, at Ugh lomi's feet

To Bo it seemed the strangest thing He had a comforting sense of tall reeds on either side, and an [illegible] back fell away forward and he looked Ugh lomi in the face over his prostrate leader It felt to Bo as if his heart had fallen down a well He had a throwing stone in one hand and an ashen stabbing stick in the other *He did not live to the end of his momentary hesitation* which to use

Snail eater was a readier man, and besides Bo did not fall forward as Siss had done, but gave at his knees and hips, crumpling up with the toothed club upon his head The Snail eater drove his spear forward swift and straight, and took Ugh lomi in the muscle of the shoulder, and then he drove him hard with the smiting stone in his other hand shouting out as he did so The new club swished ineffectually through the reeds

Eudena saw Ugh lomi come staggering back from the narrow path into the open space, tripping over Siss and with a foot of ashen stake sticking out of him over his arm And then the Snail eater, whose name she had given, had his final injury from her, as his exultant face came out of the reeds after his spear For she swung the first axe swift and high, and hit him fair and square on the temple, and down he went on Siss at prostrate Ugh lomi's feet

But before Ugh lomi could get up, the two red haired men were tumbling out of the reeds, spears and smiting stones ready, and Snake hard behind them One she struck on the neck, but not to fell him, and he blundered aside and spoilt his brother's blow at Ugh lomi's head In a moment Ugh lomi dropped his club and had his assailant by the waist, and had pitched him sideways sprawling He snatched at his club again and recovered it The man Eudena had hit stabbed at her with his spear as he stumbled from her blow, and involuntarily she gave ground to avoid him He hesitated between her and Ugh lomi, half turned, gave a vague cry at finding Ugh lomi so near, and in a moment Ugh lomi had him by the throat, and the club had its third victim As he went down Ugh lomi shouted—no words, but an exultant cry

The other red haired man was six feet from her with his back to her, and a darker red streaking his head He was struggling to his feet She had an irrational impulse to stop his rising She flung the axe at him missed saw his face in profile, and he had swerved beyond little Si, and was running through the reeds She had a transitory vision of Snake standing in the throat of the path, half turned away from her, and then she saw his back She saw the club whirling through the air, and the shock head of Ugh lomi, with blood in the hair and blood upon the shoulder, vanishing below the reeds in pursuit Then she heard Snake scream like a woman

She ran past Si to where the handle of the axe stuck out of a clump of fern, and turning found herself panting and alone with three motionless bodies The air was full of shouts and screams For a space she was sick and giddy, and then it came into her head that Ugh lomi was being killed along the reed path, and with an inarticulate cry she leapt over the body of Bo and hurried after him Snake's feet lay across the path, and his head was among the reeds She followed the path until it bent round and opened out by the alders, and thence she saw all that was left of the tribe in the open, scattering like dead leaves before a gale, and going back over the knoll Ugh lomi was hard upon Cat's skin

But Cat's skin was fleet of foot and got away, and so did young Wau Hau when Ugh lomi turned upon him, and Ugh lomi pursued Wau Hau far beyond the knoll before he desisted He had the rage of battle on him now, and the wood thrust through his shoulder stung him like a spur When she saw he was in no danger she stopped running and stood panting, watching the distant active figures run up and vanish one by one over the knoll In a little time she was alone again Everything had happened very swiftly The smoke of Brother Fire rose straight and steady from the squatting place, just as it had done ten minutes ago, when the old woman had stood yonder worshipping the lion

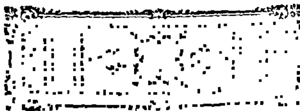
And after a long time, as it seemed, Ugh lomi re appeared over the knoll, and came back to Eudena, triumphant and breathing heavily She stood, her hair about her eyes and hot faced, with the blood stained

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and at the sight of his glowing face her tense pose relaxed somewhat, and she stood sobbing and rejoicing



STORY THE FOURTH

A Story of the Days to Come

I—The Cure for Love

THE excellent Mr Morris was an Englishman, and he lived in the days of Queen Victoria the Good He was a prosperous and very sensible man, he read *The Times* and went to church, and as he grew towards middle age an expression of quiet contented contempt for all who were not as himself settled on his face. He was one of those people who do everything that is right and proper and sensible with inevitable regularity He always wore just the right and proper clothes steering the narrow way between the smart and the shabby, always subscribed to the right charities just the judicious compromise between ostentation and meanness, and never failed to have his hair cut to exactly the proper length

Everything that it was right and proper for a man in his position to possess he possessed, and everything that it was not right and proper for a man in his position to possess, he did not possess

And among other right and proper possessions, this Mr Morris had a wife and children They were the right sort of wife, and the right sort and number of children, of course, nothing imaginative or highty flighty about any of them, so far as Mr Morris could see, they wore perfectly correct clothing, neither smart nor hygienic nor faddy in any way, but just sensible, and they lived in a nice sensible house in the later Victorian sham Queen Anne style of architecture, with sham half timbering of chocolate painted plaster in the gables, Lincrusta Walton sham carved oak panels, a terrace of terra cotta to imitate stone, and cathedral glass in the front door His boys went to good solid schools, and were put to respectable professions his girls, in spite of a fantastic protest or so were all married to suitable steady, oldish young men with good prospects And when it was a fit and proper thing for him to do so, Mr Morris died His tomb was of marble and, without any art nonsense or laudatory inscription, quietly imposing — such being the fashion of his time

He underwent various changes according to the accepted custom in these cases, and long before this story begins his bones even had become dust, and were scattered to the four quarters of heaven And his sons and his grandsons and his great grandsons and his great great grandsons, they too were dust and ashes, and were scattered likewise It was a thing he could not have imagined that a day would come when even his great great grandsons would be scattered to the four winds of heaven If any one had suggested it to him he would have resented it He was one of those worthy people who take no interest in the future of mankind at all He had grave doubts, indeed, if there was any future for mankind after he was dead

It seemed quite impossible and quite uninteresting to imagine anything happening after he was dead Yet the thing was so, and when even his great great grandson

was dead and decayed and forgotten, when the sham half timbered house had gone the way of all shams, and *The Times* was extinct, and the silk hat a ridiculous antiquity, and the modestly imposing stone that had been sacred to Mr Morris had been burnt to make lime for mortar, and all that Mr Morris had found real and important was sere and dead, the world was still going on, and people were still going about it, just as heedless and impatient of the Future, or, indeed of anything but their own selves and property, as Mr Morris had been

And strange to tell, and much as Mr Morris would have been angered if any one had foreshadowed *it to him* all over the world there were scattered a *multitude* of people, filled with the breath of life, in whose *veins* the blood of Mr Morris flowed Just as some day the life which is gathered now in the reader of this very story may also be scattered far and wide about this world, and mingled with a thousand alien strains, beyond all thought and tracing

And among the descendants of this Mr Morris was one almost as sensible and clear headed as his ancestor He had just the same stout, short frame as that ancient man of the nineteenth century, from whom his name of Morris—he spelt it Mwres—came, he had the same half contemptuous expression of face He was a prosperous person, too, as times went, and he disliked the "new fangled," and bothers about the *future* and the lower classes, just as much as the ancestral Morris had done He did not read *The Times* indeed, *he did not* know there ever had been a *Times*—that institution had foundered somewhere in the intervening gulf of years, but the phonograph machine, that *talked* to him as he made his toilet of a morning, might *have* been the voice of a reincarnated Blowitz when it dealt with the world's affairs This phonographic machine was the size and shape of a Dutch clock, and down *the* front of it were electric barometric indicators, and an

electric clock and calendar, and automatic engagement reminders, and where the clock would have been was the mouth of a trumpet When it had news the trumpet gobbled like a turkey, "Galloop galloop," and then brayed out its message as, let us say a trumpet might bray It would tell Mwres in full rich, throaty tones about the overnight accidents to the omnibus flying machines that plied around the world, the latest arrivals at the fashionable resorts in Tibet, and of all the great monopolist company meetings of the day before, while he was dressing If Mwres did not like hearing what it said, he had only to touch a stud, and it would choke a little and talk about some thing else

Of course his toilet differed very much from that of his ancestor It is doubtful which would have been the more shocked and pained to find himself in the clothing of the other Mwres would certainly have sooner gone forth to the world stark naked than in the silk hat, frock coat, grey trousers and watch chain that had filled Mr Morris with sombre self respect in the past For Mwres there was no shaving to do a skilful operator had long ago removed every hair root from his face His legs he encased in pleasant pink and amber garments of an air tight material, which with the help of an ingenious little pump he distended so as to suggest enormous muscles Above this he also wore pneumatic garments beneath an amber silk tunic, so that he was clothed in air and admirably protected against sudden extremes of heat or cold Over this he flung a scarlet cloak with its edge fantastically curved On his head, which had been skilfully deprived of every scrap of hair, he adjusted a pleasant little cap of bright scarlet, held on by suction and inflated with hydrogen, and *curiously like the comb of a cock* So his toilet was complete, and, conscious of being soberly and becomingly attired, he was ready to face his fellow beings with a tranquil eye

This Mwres—the civility of "Mr" had vanished ages ago—was one of the officials under the Wind Vane and Waterfall Trust, the great company that owned every wind wheel and waterfall in the world, and which pumped all the water and supplied all the electric energy that people in these latter days required He lived in a vast hotel near that part of London called Seventh Way, and had very large and comfortable apartments on the seventeenth floor Households and family life had long since disappeared with the progressive refinement of manners, and indeed the steady rise in rents and land values, the disappearance of domestic servants, the elaboration of cookery, had rendered the separate domicile of Victorian times impossible, even had any one desired such a savage seclusion When his toilet was completed he went towards one of the two doors of his apartment—there were doors at opposite ends, each marked with a huge arrow pointing one one way and one the other—touched a stud to open it, and emerged on a wide passage, the centre of which bore chairs and was moving at a steady pace to the left On some of these chairs were seated gaily dressed men and women He nodded to an acquaintance—it was not in those days etiquette to talk before breakfast—and seated himself on one of these chairs, and in a few seconds he had been carried to the doors of a lift, by which he descended to the great and splendid hall in which his breakfast would be automatically served

It was a very different meal from a Victorian breakfast The rude masses of bread needing to be carved and smeared over with animal fat before they could be made palatable, the still recognisable fragments of recently killed animals hideously charred and hacked, the eggs torn ruthlessly from beneath some protesting hen,—such things as these, though they constituted the ordinary fare of Victorian times, would have awakened only horror and disgust in the refined minds of the

people of these latter days Instead were pastes and cakes of agreeable and variegated design, without any suggestion in colour or form of the unfortunate animals from which their substance and juices were derived They appeared on little dishes sliding out upon a rail from a little box at one side of the table The surface of the table, to judge by touch and eye, would have appeared to a nineteenth century person to be covered with fine white damask, but this was really an oxidised metallic surface, and could be cleaned instantly after a meal There were hundreds of such little tables in the hall, and at most of them were other latter day citizens singly or in groups And as Mwres seated himself before his elegant repast, the invisible orchestra, which had been resting during an interval, resumed and filled the air with music

But Mwres did not display any great interest either in his breakfast or the music, his eye wandered in

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intensity of his eyes became apparent Mwres reseated himself and pointed to a chair beside him

"I feared you would never come," he said In spite of the intervening space of time, the English language was still almost exactly the same as it had been in England under Victoria the Good The invention of the phonograph and suchlike means of recording sound, and the gradual replacement of books by such contrivances, had not only saved the human eyesight from decay, but had also by the establishment of a sure standard arrested the process of change in accent that had hitherto been so inevitable

"I was delayed by an interesting case," said the man in green and yellow "A prominent politician—ahem!

—suffering from overwork" He glanced at the breakfast and seated himself "I have been awake for forty hours"

"Eh dear!" said Mwres "fancy that! You hypnotists have your work to do"

The hypnotist helped himself to some attractive amber coloured jelly "I happen to be a good deal in request" he said modestly

"Heaven knows what we should do without you"

"Oh! we're not so indispensable as all that" said the hypnotist, ruminating the flavour of the jelly "The world did very well without us for some thousands of years Two hundred years ago even—not one! In practice, that is Physicians by the thousand, of course—frightfully clumsy brutes for the most part and following one another like sheep—but doctors of the mind, except a few empirical flounderers there were none"

He concentrated his mind on the jelly

"But were people so sane—?" began Mwres

The hypnotist shook his head "It didn't matter then if they were a bit silly or faddy Life was so easy going then No competition worth speaking of—no pressure A human being had to be very lopsided before anything happened Then, you know, they clapped 'em away in what they called a lunatic asylum"

"I know," said Mwres "In these confounded historical romances that every one is listening to they always rescue a beautiful girl from an asylum or something of the sort I don't know if you attend to that rubbish"

"I must confess I do," said the hypnotist. "It carries one out of oneself to hear of those quaint, adventurous, half civilised days of the nineteenth century when men were stout and women simple I like a good swaggering story before all things Curious times they were, with their smutty railways and puffing

old iron trains, their rum little houses and their horse vehicles. I suppose you don't read books?"

"Dear, no," said Mwres. "I went to a modern school and we had none of that old fashioned nonsense. Phonographs are good enough for me."

"Of course," said the hypnotist, "of course," and surveyed the table for his next choice. "You know," he said, helping himself to a dark blue confection that promised well, "in those days our business was scarcely thought of. I daresay if any one had told them that in two hundred years' time a class of men would be entirely occupied in impressing things upon the memory, effacing unpleasant ideas, controlling and overcoming instinctive but undesirable impulses, and so forth, by means of hypnotism, they would have refused to believe the thing possible. Few people knew that an order made during a mesmeric trance, even an order to forget or an order to desire, could be given so as to be obeyed after the trance was over. Yet there were men alive then who could have told them the thing was as absolutely certain to come about as—well, the transit of Venus."

"They knew of hypnotism, then?"

"Oh, dear, yes! They used it—for painless dentistry and things like that! This blue stuff is confoundedly good: what is it?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Mwres, "but I admit it's very good. Take some more."

The hypnotist repeated his praises, and there was an appreciative pause.

"Speaking of these historical romances," said Mwres, with an attempt at an easy, off hand manner, "brings me—ah—to the matter I—ah—had in mind when I asked you—when I expressed a wish to see you." He paused and took a deep breath.

The hypnotist turned an attentive eye upon him, and continued eating.

"The fact is," said Mwres, "I have a—in fact a—

—suffering from overwork" He glanced at the breakfast and seated himself "I have been awake for forty hours'

"Eh dear!" said Mwres "fancy that! You hypnotists have your work to do"

The hypnotist helped himself to some attractive amber coloured jelly "I happen to be a good deal in request" he said modestly

"Heaven knows what we should do without you"

"Oh! we're not so indispensable as all that' said the hypnotist, ruminating the flavour of the jelly 'The world did very well without us for some thousands of years Two hundred years ago even—not one! In practice, that is Physicians by the thousand, of course—frightfully clumsy brutes for the most part and following one another like sheep—but doctors of the mind, except a few empirical flounderers there were none"

He concentrated his mind on the jelly

"But were people so sane—?' began Mwres

The hypnotist shook his head "It didn't matter then if they were a bit silly or faddy Life was so easy going then No competition worth speaking of—no pressure A human being had to be very lopsided before anything happened Then, you know, they clapped 'em away in what they called a lunatic asylum"

"I know," said Mwres "In these confounded historical romances that every one is listening to, they always rescue a beautiful girl from an asylum or something of the sort I don't know if you attend to that rubbish"

"I must confess I do," said the hypnotist "It carries one out of oneself to hear of those quaint adventurous, half civilised days of the nineteenth century when men were stout and women simple I like a good swaggering story before all things Curious times they were, with their smutty railways and puffing

"No—not notes Ah—poems"

The hypnotist raised his eyebrows "How did she meet him?"

"Tripped coming down from the flying machine from Paris—and fell into his arms The mischief was done in a moment!"

"Yes?"

"Well—that's all Things must be stopped That is what I want to consult you about What must be done? What *can* be done? Of course I'm not a hypnotist my knowledge is limited But you—?"

"Hypnotism is not magic," said the man in green, putting both arms on the table

"Oh, precisely! But still—!"

If

she

But if once she can be hypnotised—even by somebody else—the thing is done"

"You can—?"

"Oh, certainly! Once we get her amenable, then we can suggest that she *must* marry Bindon—that that is her fate, or that the young man is repulsive, and that when she sees him she will be giddy and faint, or any little thing of that sort Or if we can get her into a sufficiently profound trance we can suggest that she should forget him altogether—"

"Precisely"

"But the problem is to get her hypnotised Of course no sort of proposal or suggestion must come from you—because no doubt she already distrusts you in the matter"

The hypnotist leant his head upon his arm and thought

"It's hard a man cannot dispose of his own daughter," said Mwres irrelevantly

"You must give me the name and address of the young lady," said the hypnotist, "and any information

bearing upon the matter. And, by the bye, is there any money in the affair?"

Mwres hesitated

"There's a sum—in fact, a considerable sum—invested in the Patent Road Company From her mother That's what makes the thing so exasperating"

"Exactly," said the hypnotist And he proceeded to cross examine Mwres on the entire affair

It was a lengthy interview

And meanwhile "Elizebeθ Mwres," as she spelt her name, or "Elizabeth Morris," as a nineteenth century person would have put it, was sitting in a quiet waiting place beneath the great stage upon which the flying machine from Paris descended And beside her sat her slender, handsome lover reading her the poem he had written that morning while on duty upon the stage When he had finished they sat for a time in silence and then, as if for their special entertainment, the great machine that had come flying through the air from America that morning rushed down out of the sky

At first it was a little oblong, faint and blue amidst the distant fleecy clouds and then it grew swiftly large and white, and larger and whiter, until they could see the separate tiers of sails each hundreds of feet wide, and the lank body they supported, and at last even the swinging seats of the passengers in a dotted row Although it was falling it seemed to them to be rushing up the sky, and over the roof spaces of the city below its shadow leapt towards them They heard the whistling rush of the air about it and its yelling siren, shrill and swelling, to warn those who were on its landing stage of its arrival And abruptly the note fell down a couple of octaves, and it had passed, and the sky was clear and void, and she could turn her sweet eyes again to Denton at her side

Their silence ended, and Denton, speaking in a little language of broken English that was, they fancied

their private possession—though lovers have used such little languages since the world began—told her how they too would leap into the air one morning out of all the obstacles and difficulties about them, and fly to a sunlit city of delight he knew of in Japan, half way about the world

She loved the dream, but she feared the leap, and she put him off with "Some day, dearest one, some day" to all his pleading that it might be soon, and at last came a shrilling of whistles, and it was time for him to go back to his duties on the stage They parted—as lovers have been wont to part for thousands of years She walked down a passage to a lift, and so came to one of the streets of that latter day London, all glazed in with glass from the weather, and with incessant moving platforms that went to all parts of the city And by one of these she returned to her apartments in the Hotel for Women where she lived, the apartments that were in telephonic communication with all the best lecturers in the world But the sun light of the flying stage was in her heart, and the wisdom of all the best lecturers in the world seemed folly in that light

She spent the middle part of the day in the gymnasium and took her midday meal with two other girls and their common chaperone—for it was still the custom to have a chaperone in the case of motherless girls of the more prosperous classes The chaperone had a visitor that day, a man in green and yellow, with a white face and vivid eyes, who talked amazingly Among other things he fell to praising a new historical romance that one of the great popular story tellers of the day had just put forth It was of course, about the spacious times of Queen Victoria and the author, among other pleasing novelties made a little argument before each section of the story in imitation of the chapter headings of the old fashioned books as for example, "How the Cabmen of Pimlico stopped

the Victoria Omnibuses, and of the Great Fight in Palace Yard," and "How the Piccadilly Policeman was slain in the midst of his Duty." The man in green and yellow praised this innovation. "These pithy sentences," he said, "are admirable. They show at a glance those headlong, tumultuous times when men and animals jostled in the filthy streets, and death might wait for one at every corner. Life was life then! How great the world must have seemed then! How marvellous! There were still parts of the world absolutely unexplored. Nowadays we have almost abolished wonder, we lead lives so trim and orderly that courage, endurance, faith, all the noble virtues seem fading from mankind."

And so on, taking the girls' thoughts with him, until the life they led, life in the vast and intricate London of the twenty-second century, a life interspersed with soaring excursions to every part of the globe, seemed to them a monotonous misery compared with the dædal past.

At first Elizabeth did not join in the conversation, but after a time the subject became so interesting that she made a few shy interpolations. But he scarcely seemed to notice her as he talked. He went on to describe a new method of entertaining people. They were hypnotised, and then suggestions were made to them so skilfully that they seemed to be living in ancient times again. They played out a little romance in the past as vivid as reality, and when at last they awakened they remembered all they had been through as though it were a real thing.

"It is a thing we have sought to do for years and years," said the hypnotist. "It is practically an artificial dream. And we know the way at last. Think of all it opens out to us—the enrichment of our experience, the recovery of adventure, the refuge it offers from this sordid, competitive life in which we live! Think!"

"And you can do that!" said the chaperone eagerly.

"The thing is possible at last," the hypnotist said "You may order a dream as you wish"

The chaperone was the first to be hypnotised, and the dream she said, was wonderful, when she came to again

The other two girls encouraged by her enthusiasm also placed themselves in the hands of the hypnotist and had plunges into the romantic past No one suggested that Elizabeth should try this novel entertainment it was at her own request at last that she was taken into that land of dreams where there is neither any freedom of choice nor will

And so the mischief was done

One day when Denton went down to that quiet seat beneath the flying stage Elizabeth was not in her wonted place He was disappointed and a little angry The next day she did not come and the next also He was afraid To hide his fear from himself he set to work to write sonnets for her when she should come again

For three days he fought against his dread by such distraction, and then the truth was before him clear and cold and would not be denied She might be ill she might be dead, but he would not believe that he had been betrayed There followed a week of misery And then he knew she was the only thing on earth worth having, and that he must seek her, however hopeless the search, until she was found once more

He had some small private means of his own, and so he threw over his appointment on the flying stage, and set himself to find this girl who had become at last all the world to him He did not know where she lived, and little of her circumstances for it had been part of the delight of her girlish romance that he should know nothing of her, nothing of the difference of their station The ways of the city opened before him east and west, north and south Even in Victorian days London was a maze, that little London with its

poor four millions of people, but the London he explored, the London of the twenty-second century, was a London of thirty million souls At first he was energetic and headlong, taking time neither to eat nor sleep He sought for weeks and months, he went through every imaginable phase of fatigue and despair, over excitement and anger Long after hope was dead, by the sheer inertia of his desire he still went to and fro, peering into faces and looking this way and that, in the incessant ways and lifts and passages of that interminable hive of men

At last chance was kind to him, and he saw her

It was in a time of festivity He was hungry, he had paid the inclusive fee and had gone into one of the gigantic dining places of the city, he was pushing his way among the tables and scrutinising by mere force of habit every group he passed

He stood still, robbed of all power of motion, his eyes wide, his lips apart Elizabeth sat scarcely twenty yards away from him, looking straight at him Her eyes were as hard to him, as hard and expressionless and void of recognition, as the eyes of a statue

She looked at him for a moment, and then her gaze passed beyond him

Had he had only her eyes to judge by he might have doubted if it was indeed Elizabeth, but he knew her by the gesture of her hand, by the grace of a wanton little curl that floated over her ear as she moved her head Something was said to her, and she turned smiling tolerantly to the man beside her, a little man in foolish raiment knobbed and spiked like some odd reptile with pneumatic horns — the Bindon of her father's choice

For a moment Denton stood white and wild eyed, then came a terrible faintness, and he sat before one of the little tables He sat down with his back to her, and for a time he did not dare to look at her again When at last he did, she and Bindon and two

other people were standing up to go The others were her father and her chaperone

He sat as if incapable of action until the four figures were remote and small, and then he rose up possessed with the one idea of pursuit For a space he feared he had lost them, and then he came upon Elizabeth and her chaperone again in one of the streets of moving platforms that intersected the city Bindon and Mwres had disappeared

He could not control himself to patience He felt he must speak to her forthwith, or die He pushed forward to where they were seated, and sat down beside them His white face was convulsed with half hysterical excitement

He laid his hand on her wrist "Elizabeth!" he said

She turned in unfeigned astonishment Nothing but the fear of a strange man showed in her face

"Elizabeth," he cried, and his voice was strange to him "dearest—you *know* me?"

Elizabeth's face showed nothing but alarm and perplexity She drew herself away from him The chaperone, a little grey headed woman with mobile features, leant forward to intervene Her resolute bright eyes examined Denton "*What* do you say?" she asked

"This young lady," said Denton,—"she knows me"

"Do you know him, dear?"

"No," said Elizabeth in a strange voice, and with a hand to her forehead, speaking almost as one who repeats a lesson "No, I do not know him I *know*—I do not know him"

"But—but Not know me! It is I—Denton Denton! To whom you used to talk Don't you remember the flying stages? The little seat in the open air? The verses—"

"No," cried Elizabeth,—"no I do not know him I do not know him There is something . . . But I

don t know All I know is that I do not know him" Her face was a face of infinite distress

The sharp eyes of the chaperone flitted to and fro from the girl to the man "You see?" she said with the faint shadow of a smile "She does not know you"

"I do not know you," said Elizabeth "Of that I am sure"

But dear—the songs—the little verses—"

"She does not know you," said the chaperone "You must not You have made a mistake You must not go on talking to us after that You must not annoy us on the public ways"

"But— said Denton and for a moment his miserably haggard face appealed against fate

"You must not persist, young man," protested the chaperone

Elizabeth!" he cried

Her face was the face of one who is tormented "I do not know you," she cried, hand to brow "Oh I *do* not know *you*!"

For an instant Denton sat stunned Then he stood up and groaned aloud

He made a strange gesture of appeal towards the remote glass roof of the public way, then turned and went plunging recklessly from one moving platform to another, and vanished amidst the swarms of people going to and fro thereon The chaperone's eyes followed him, and then she looked at the curious faces about her

"Dear," asked Elizabeth, clasping her hand, and too deeply moved to heed observation, "who was *that man*? Who *was* that man?"

The chaperone raised her eyebrows She spoke in a clear, audible voice "Some half witted creature I have never set eyes on him before"

"Never?"

"Never, dear Do not trouble your mind about a thing like this"

And soon after this the celebrated hypnotist who dressed in green and yellow had another client The young man paced his consulting room pale and disordered "I want to forget," he cried "I *must* forget"

The hypnotist watched him with quiet eyes, studied his face and clothes and bearing "To forget anything,—pleasure or pain—is to be by so much—*less However, you know your own concern My fee is* high"

If only I can forget—"

"That's easy enough with you You wish it I've done much harder things Quite recently I hardly expected to do it the thing was done against the will of the hypnotised person A love affair too—like yours A girl So rest assured"

The young man came and sat beside the hypnotist His manner was a forced calm He looked into the *hypnotist's eyes* "*I will tell you Of course you will* want to know what it is There was a girl Her name was Elizabeth Mwres Well "

He stopped He had seen the instant surprise on the hypnotist's face In that instant he knew He stood up He seemed to dominate the seated figure by his side He gripped the shoulder of green and gold For a time he could not find words

"*Give her me back!*" he said at last "Give her me back!"

"*What do you mean?*" gasped the hypnotist

"Give her me back"

"Give whom?"

"Elizabeth Mwres—the girl—"

The hypnotist tried to free himself, he rose to his feet Denton's grip tightened

"*Let go!*" cried the hypnotist, thrusting an arm against Denton's chest

In a moment the two men were locked in a clumsy wrestle Neither had the slightest training—for athleti

cism, except for exhibition and to afford opportunity for betting, had faded out of the earth—but Denton was not only the younger but the stronger of the two They swayed across the room, and then the hypnotist had gone down under his antagonist They fell together

Denton leaped to his feet, dismayed at his own fury, but the hypnotist lay still, and suddenly from a little white mark where his forehead had struck a stool shot a hurrying band of red For a space Denton stood over him irresolute trembling

A fear of the consequences entered his gently nurtured mind He turned towards the door "No," he said aloud, and came back to the middle of the room Over coming the instinctive repugnance of one who had seen no act of violence in all his life before, he knelt down beside his antagonist and felt his heart Then he peered at the wound He rose quietly and looked about him He began to see more of the situation

[illegible] his

[illegible]

The hypnotist did not speak But prese[illegible] cated by a gesture that in his opinion he had been sponged enough "Let me get up," he said

"Not yet," said Denton

"You have assaulted me, you scoundrel!"

"We are alone," said Denton, "and the door is secure"

There was an interval of thought

"Unless I sponge," said Denton, "your forehead will develop a tremendous bruise"

"You can go on sponging," said the hypnotist sulkily

There was another pause

"We might be in the Stone Age," said the hypnotist "Violence! Struggle!"

"In the Stone Age no man dared to come between man and woman," said Denton

The hypnotist thought again

"What are you going to do?" he asked

"While you were insensible I found the girl's address on your tablets I did n t know it before I telephoned She will be here soon Then—"

' She will bring her chaperone"

"That is all right"

"But what—? I don't see What do you mean to do?'

"I looked about for a weapon also It is an astonishing thing how few weapons there are nowadays If you consider that in the Stone Age men owned scarcely anything *but* weapons I hit at last upon this lamp I have wrenched off the wires and things and I hold it so ' He extended it over the hypnotist's shoulders "With that I can quite easily smash your skull I *will*—unless you do as I tell you"

"Violence is no remedy," said the hypnotist, quoting from the Modern Man's Book of Moral Maxims"

"It's an undesirable disease," said Denton

"Well?'

"You will tell that chaperone you are going to order the girl to marry that knobby little brute with the red hair and ferrety eyes I believe that's how things stand?"

"Yes—that's how things stand"

"And, pretending to do that, you will restore her memory of me"

"It's unprofessional"

"Look here! If I cannot have that girl I would rather die than not I don't propose to respect your little fancies If anything goes wrong you shall not live five minutes This is a rude makeshift of a weapon, and it may quite conceivably be painful to kill you But I will It is unusual, I know, nowadays to do things like this—mainly because there is so little in life that is worth being violent about"

"The chaperone will see you directly she comes—"

"I shall stand in that recess Behind you"

The hypnotist thought "You are a determined young man" he said, "and only half civilised I have tried to do my duty to my client, but in this affair you seem likely to get your own way [illegible]"

"Y[illegible]"

[illegible]

[illegible] afterwards [illegible]

"There is nothing a hypnotist or doctor hates so much as a scandal I at least am no savage I am annoyed But in a day or so I shall bear no malice "

"Thank you And now that we understand each other there is no necessity to keep you sitting any longer on the floor"

II —The Vacant Country

The world they say, changed more between the year 1800 and the year 1900 than it had done in the previous five hundred years That century, the nineteenth century, was the dawn of a new epoch in the history of mankind—the epoch of the great cities, the end of the old order of country life

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the majority of mankind still lived upon the countryside, as their way of life had been for countless generations All over the world they dwelt in little towns and villages then, and engaged either directly in agriculture, or in occupations that were of service to the agriculturist They travelled rarely, and dwelt close to their work, because swift means of transit had not yet come The few who travelled went either on foot, or in slow sailing ships, or by means of jogging horses incapable of more than sixty miles a day Think of it!—sixty miles a day Here and there, in those sluggish times, a town grew a little larger than its neighbours as a port or as a centre of government but all the towns in the world with more than a hundred thousand inhabi-

tants could be counted on a man's fingers. So it was in the beginning of the nineteenth century. By the end, the invention of railways, telegraphs, steamships, and complex agricultural machinery, had changed all these things: changed them beyond all hope of return. The vast shops, the varied pleasures, the countless conveniences of the larger towns were suddenly possible, and no sooner existed than they were brought into competition with the homely resources of the rural centres. Mankind were drawn to the cities by an overwhelming attraction. The demand for labour fell with the increase of machinery, the local markets were entirely superseded, and there was a rapid growth of the larger centres at the expense of the open country.

The flow of population townward was the constant preoccupation of Victorian writers. In Great Britain and New England, in India and China, the same thing was remarked: everywhere a few swollen towns were visibly replacing the ancient order. That this was an inevitable result of improved means of travel and transport—that, given swift means of transit, these things must be—was realised by few, and the most puerile schemes were devised to overcome the mysterious magnetism of the urban centres and keep the people on the land.

Yet the developments of the nineteenth century were only the dawning of the new order. The first great cities of the new time were horribly inconvenient, darkened by smoky fogs, insanitary and noisy; but the discovery of new methods of building, new methods of heating, changed all this. Between 1900 and 2000 the

days.

The introduction of railways was only the first step in that development of those means of locomotion which

finally revolutionised human life By the year 2000 railways and roads had vanished together The rail ways, robbed of their rails, had become weedy ridges and ditches upon the face of the world, the old roads, strange barbaric tracks of flint and soil, hammered by hand or rolled by rough iron rollers, strewn with miscellaneous filth and cut by iron hoofs and wheels into ruts and puddles often many inches deep, had been replaced by patent tracks made of a substance called Eadhamite This Eadhamite—it was named after its patentee—ranks with the invention of printing and steam as one of the epoch making discoveries of the world's history

When Eadham discovered the substance, he probably thought of it as a mere cheap substitute for india rubber it cost a few shillings a ton But you can never tell all an invention will do It was the genius of a man named Warming that pointed to the possibility of using it, not only for the tires of wheels, but as a road substance and who organised the enormous network of public ways that speedily covered the world

These public ways were made with longitudinal divisions On the outer on either side went foot cyclists and conveyances travelling at a less speed than twenty five miles an hour, in the middle, motors capable of speed up to a hundred, and the inner, Warming (in the face of enormous ridicule) reserved for vehicles travelling at speeds of a hundred miles an hour and upward

For ten years his inner ways were vacant Before he died they were the most crowded of all, and vast light frameworks with wheels of twenty and thirty feet in diameter, hurled along them at paces that year after year rose steadily towards two hundred miles an hour And by the time this revolution was accomplished, a parallel revolution had transformed the ever growing cities Before the development of practical science the fogs and filth of Victorian times vanished Electric heating replaced fires (in 2013 the lighting of a fire

that did not absolutely consume its own smoke was made an indictable nuisance) and all the city ways all public squares and places were covered in with a recently invented glass like substance The roofing of London became practically continuous Certain short sighted and foolish legislation against tall buildings was abolished and London from a squat expanse of petty houses—feebly archaic in design—rose steadily towards the sky To the municipal responsibility for water light and drainage was added another and that was ventilation

But to tell of all the changes in human convenience that these two hundred years brought about to tell of the long foreseen invention of flying to describe how life in households was steadily supplanted by life in interminable hotels how at last even those who were still concerned in agricultural work came to live in the towns and to go to and fro to their work every day to describe how at last in all England only four towns remained each with many millions of people and how there were left no inhabited houses in all the country side to tell all this would take us far from our story of Denton and his Elizabeth They had been separated and reunited and still they could not marry For Denton—it was his only fault—had no money Neither had Elizabeth until she was twenty one and as yet she was only eighteen At twenty-one all the property of her mother would come to her for that was the custom of the time She did not know that it was possible to anticipate her fortune and Denton was far too delicate a lover to suggest such a thing So things stuck hopelessly between them Elizabeth said that she was very unhappy and that nobody understood her but Denton and that when she was away from him she was wretched and Denton said that his heart longed for her day and night And they met as often as they could to enjoy the discussion of their sorrows

They met one day at their little seat upon the *flying*

stage The precise site of this meeting was where in Victorian times the road from Wimbledon came out upon the common They were, however five hundred feet above that point Their seat looked far over London To convey the appearance of it all to a nineteenth century reader would have been difficult One would have had to tell him to think of the Crystal Palace, of the newly built "mammoth" hotels—as those little affairs were called—of the larger railway stations of his time, and to imagine such buildings enlarged to vast proportions and run together and continuous over the whole metropolitan area If then he was told that this continuous roof space bore a huge forest of rotating wind wheels, he would have begun very dimly to appreciate what to these young people was the commonest sight in their lives

To their eyes it had something of the quality of a prison, and they were talking as they had talked a hundred times before, of how they might escape from it and be at last happy together escape from it, that is before the appointed three years were at an end It was they both agreed, not only impossible but almost wicked to wait three years "Before that," said Denton —and the notes of his voice told of a splendid chest— "*we might both be dead!*"

Their vigorous young hands had to grip at this, and then Elizabeth had a still more poignant thought that brought the tears from her wholesome eyes and down her healthy cheeks "*One* of us" she said, "*one* of us might be—"

She choked she could not say the word that is so terrible to the young and happy

Yet to marry and be very poor in the cities of that time was—for any one who had lived pleasantly—a very dreadful thing In the old agricultural days that had drawn to an end in the eighteenth century there had been a pretty proverb of love in a cottage, and indeed in those days the poor of the countryside had dwelt

in flower covered, diamond windowed cottages of thatch and plaster, with the sweet air and earth about them amidst tangled hedges and the song of birds and with the ever changing sky overhead But all this had changed (the change was already beginning in the nineteenth century), and a new sort of life was opening for the poor—in the lower quarters of the city

In the nineteenth century the lower quarters were still beneath the sky, they were areas of land on clay or other unsuitable soil liable to floods or exposed to the smoke of more fortunate districts insufficiently supplied with water, and as insanitary as the great fear of in fectious diseases felt by the wealthier classes permitted In the twenty second century, however, the growth of the city storey above storey and the coalescence of buildings, had led to a different arrangement The prosperous people lived in a vast series of sumptuous hotels in the upper storeys and halls of the city fabric, the industrial population dwelt beneath in the tremen dous ground floor and basement, so to speak, of the place

In the refinement of life and manners these lower classes differed little from their ancestors, the East enders of Queen Victoria's time, but they had developed a distinct dialect of their own In these under ways they lived and died, rarely ascending to the surface except when work took them there Since for most of them this was the sort of life to which they had been born, they found no great misery in such circum stances but for people like Denton and Elizabeth, such a plunge would have seemed more terrible than death

"And yet what else is there?" asked Elizabeth

Denton professed not to know Apart from his own feeling of delicacy, he was not sure how Elizabeth would like the idea of borrowing on the strength of her expectations

The passage from London to Paris even, said Eliza beth, was beyond their means and in Paris, as in any

other city in the world, life would be just as costly and impossible as in London

Well might Denton cry aloud "If only we had lived in those days, dearest! If only we had lived in the past!" For to their eyes even nineteenth century Whitechapel was seen through a mist of romance

"Is there *nothing?* cried Elizabeth, suddenly weeping "Must we really wait for those three long *years?* Fancy *three* years—six and thirty months!" The human capacity for patience had not grown with the ages

Then suddenly Denton was moved to speak of something that had already flickered across his mind He had hit upon it at last It seemed to him so wild a suggestion that he made it only half seriously But to put a thing into words has ever a way of making it seem more real and possible than it seemed before And so it was with him

"Suppose," he said, "we went into the country?"

She looked at him to see if he was serious in proposing such an adventure

"The country?"

"Yes—beyond there Beyond the hills"

"How could we live?" she said "*Where* could we live?"

"It is not impossible," he said "People used to live in the country"

"But then there were houses"

"There are the ruins of villages and towns now On the clay lands they are gone, of course But they are still left on the grazing land because it does not pay the Food Company to remove them I know that—for certain Besides, one sees them from the flying machines you know Well, we might shelter in some one of these, and repair it with our hands Do you know the thing is not so wild as it seems Some of the men who go out every day to look after the crops and herds might be paid to bring us food . . ."

She stood in front of him. "How strange it would be if one really could."

"Why not?"

"But no one dares."

"That is no reason."

"It would be—oh! it would be so romantic and strange. If only it were possible."

"Why not possible?"

"There are so many things. Think of all the things *we have, things that we should miss*."

"Should we miss them? After all, the life we lead is very unreal—very artificial." He began to expand his idea, and as he warmed to his exposition the fantastic quality of his first proposal faded away.

She thought. "But I have heard of prowlers—escaped criminals."

He nodded. He hesitated over his answer because he thought it sounded boyish. He blushed. "I could get some one I know to make me a sword."

She looked at him, with enthusiasm growing in her eyes. She had heard of swords, had seen one in a museum; she thought of those ancient days when men wore them as a common thing. His suggestion seemed an impossible dream to her, and perhaps for that reason she was eager for more detail. And inventing for the most part as he went along, he told her how they might live in the country as the old world people had done. With every detail her interest grew, for she was one of those girls for whom romance and adventure have a fascination.

His suggestion seemed, I say, an impossible dream to her on that day, but the next day they talked about it again, and it was strangely less impossible.

"At first we should take food," said Denton. "We could *carry* food for ten or twelve days." It was an age of compact artificial nourishment, and such a provision had none of the unwieldy suggestion it would have had in the nineteenth century.

other city in the world, life would be just as costly and impossible as in London

Well might Denton cry aloud "If only we had lived in those days, dearest! If only we had lived in the past!" For to their eyes even nineteenth century Whitechapel was seen through a mist of romance.

"Is there *nothing?*" cried Elizabeth, suddenly weeping "Must we really wait for those three long years? Fancy *three* years — six and thirty months!" The human capacity for patience had not grown with the ages

Then suddenly Denton was moved to speak of something that had already flickered across his mind He had hit upon it at last It seemed to him so wild a suggestion that he made it only half seriously But to put a thing into words has ever a way of making it seem more real and possible than it seemed before And so it was with him

"Suppose," he said, "we went into the country?"

She looked at him to see if he was serious in proposing such an adventure

"The country?"

"Yes—beyond there Beyond the hills"

"How could we live?" she said "If *here* could we live?"

"It is not impossible," he said "People used to live in the country"

"But then there were houses"

"There are the ruins of villages and towns now On the clay lands they are gone, of course But they are still left on the grazing land, because it does not pay the Food Company to remove them I know that—for certain Besides, one sees them from the flying machines, you know Well, we might shelter in some one of these, and repair it with our hands Do you know, the thing is not so wild as it seems Some of the men who go out every day to look after the crops and herds might be paid to bring us food . . ."

an implement of archaic form, a cross hilted thing of tempered steel

Imagine that going forth! In their days the sprawling suburbs of Victorian times with their vile roads, petty houses, foolish little gardens of shrub and geranium, and all their futile pretentious privacies, had disappeared the towering buildings of the new age, the mechanical ways, the electric and water mains all came to an end together like a wall, like a cliff near four hundred feet in height, abrupt and sheer All about the city spread the carrot, swede, and turnip fields of the Food Company, vegetables that were the basis of a thousand varied foods, and weeds and hedgerow tangles had been utterly extirpated The incessant expense of weeding that went on year after year in the petty, wasteful and barbaric farming of the ancient days, the Food Company had economised for ever more by a campaign of extermination Here and there however, neat rows of bramble standards and apple trees with whitewashed stems, intersected the fields and at places groups of gigantic teazles reared their favoured spikes Here and there huge agricultural machines hunched under waterproof covers The mingled waters of the Wey and Mole and Wandle ran in rectangular channels, and wherever a gentle elevation of the ground permitted a fountain of deodorised sewage distributed its benefits athwart the land and made a rainbow of the sunlight

By a great archway in that enormous city wall emerged the Eadhamite road to Portsmouth swarming in the morning sunshine with an enormous traffic bearing the blue clad servants of the Food Company to their toil A rushing traffic, beside which they seemed two scarce moving dots Along the outer tracks hummed and rattled the tardy little old fashioned motors of such as had duties within twenty miles or so of the city, the inner ways were filled with vaster mechanisms—swift monocycles bearing a score of men, lank multi-

cycles, quadricycles sagging with heavy loads, empty gigantic produce carts that would come back again filled before the sun was setting, all with throbbing engines and noiseless wheels and a perpetual wild melody of horns and gongs.

Along the very verge of the outermost way our young people went in silence, newly wed and oddly shy of one another's company. Many were the things shouted to them as they tramped along, for in 2100 a foot-passenger on an English road was almost as strange a sight as a motor car would have been in 1800. But they went on with steadfast eyes into the country, paying no heed to such cries.

Before them in the south rose the Downs, blue at first, and as they came nearer changing to green, surmounted by the row of gigantic wind wheels that supplemented the wind wheels upon the roof spaces of the city, and broken and restless with the long morning shadows of those whirling vanes. By midday they had come so near that they could see here and there little patches of pallid dots—the sheep the Meat Department of the Food Company owned. In another hour they had passed the clay and the root crops and the single fence that hedged them in, and the prohibition against trespass no longer held: the levelled roadway plunged into a cutting with all its traffic, and they could leave it and walk over the greensward and up the open hillside.

Never had these children of the latter days been together in such a lonely place.

They were both very hungry and footsore—for walking was a rare exercise—and presently they sat down on the weedless, close cropped grass, and looked back for the first time at the city from which they had come, shining wide and splendid in the blue haze of the valley of the Thames. Elizabeth was a little afraid of the unenclosed sheep away up the slope—she had never been near big unrestrained animals before—but

Denton reassured her And overhead a white winged bird circled in the blue

They talked but little until they had eaten and then their tongues were loosened He spoke of the happiness that was now certainly theirs of the folly of not breaking sooner out of that magnificent prison of latter day life, of the old romantic days that had passed from the world for ever And then he became boastful He took up the sword that lay on the ground beside him, and she took it from his hand and ran a tremulous finger along the blade

"And you could," she said, "*you*—could raise this and strike a man?"

"Why not? If there were need"

"But," she said "it seems so horrible It would slash There would be" — her voice sank, — "*blood*"

"In the old romances you have read often enough "

"Oh, I know in those—yes But that is different One knows it is not blood, but just a sort of red ink . . And *you*—killing!"

She looked at him doubtfully, and then handed him back the sword

After they had rested and eaten, they rose up and went on their way towards the hills They passed quite close to a huge flock of sheep, who stared and bleated at their unaccustomed figures She had never seen sheep before and she shivered to think such gentle things must needs be slain for food A sheep dog barked from a distance, and then a shepherd appeared amidst the supports of the wind wheels, and came down towards them

When he drew near he called out asking whither they were going

Denton hesitated and told him briefly that they sought some ruined house among the Downs, in which they might live together He tried to speak in an off

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the right of that, down into the valley and follow it along by the banks of the river You come presently to a street of houses, many with the roofs still sound upon them There you may find shelter"

They thanked him

"But it's a quiet place There is no light after dark there and I have heard tell of robbers It is lonely Nothing happens there The phonographs of the story tellers the kinematograph entertainments, the news machines—none of them are to be found there If you are hungry there is no food, if you are ill no doctor" He stopped

"We shall try it," said Denton, moving to go on Then a thought struck him, and he made an agreement with the shepherd, and learnt where they might find him to buy and bring them anything of which they stood in need, out of the city

And in the evening they came to the deserted village, with its houses that seemed so small and odd to them they found it golden in the glory of the sunset and desolate and still They went from one deserted house to another marvelling at their quaint simplicity, and debating which they should choose And at last, in a sunlit corner of a room that had lost its outer wall, they came upon a wild flower, a little flower of blue that the weeders of the Food Company had overlooked

That house they decided upon, but they did not remain in it long that night, because they were resolved to feast upon nature And moreover the houses became very gaunt and shadowy after the sunlight had faded out of the sky So after they had rested a little time they went to the crest of the hill again to see with their own eyes the silence of heaven set with stars, about which the old poets had had so many things to tell It was a wonderful sight, and Denton talked like the stars, and when they went down the hill at last the sky was pale with dawn They slept but little, and in

the morning when they woke a thrush was singing in a tree

So these young people of the twenty second century began their exile That morning they were very busy exploring the resources of this new home in which they were going to live the simple life They did not explore very fast or very far, because they went everywhere hand in hand, but they found the beginnings of some furniture Beyond the village was a store of winter fodder for the sheep of the Food Company, and Denton dragged great armfuls to the house to make a bed, and in several of the houses were old fungus eaten chairs and tables—rough, barbaric, clumsy furniture, it seemed to them, and made of wood They repeated many of the things they had said on the previous day, and towards evening they found another flower, a harebell In the late afternoon some Company shepherds went down the river valley riding on a big multicycle, but they hid from them, because their presence, Elizabeth said, seemed to spoil the romance of this old world place altogether

In this fashion they lived a week For all that week the days were cloudless, and the nights, nights of starry glory, that were invaded each a little more by a crescent moon

Yet something of the first splendour of their coming faded—faded imperceptibly day after day, Denton's eloquence became fitful, and lacked fresh topics of inspiration the fatigue of their long march from London told in a certain stiffness of the limbs and each suffered from a slight unaccountable cold More over, Denton became aware of unoccupied time In one place among the carelessly heaped lumber of the old times he found a rust eaten spade, and with this he made a fitful attack on the razed and grass grown garden—though he had nothing to plant or sow He returned to Elizabeth with a sweat streaming face, after half an hour of such work.

"There were giants in those days," he said, not understanding what wont and training will do And their walk that day led them along the hills until they could see the city shimmering far away in the valley "I wonder how things are going on there," he said

And then came a change in the weather "Come out and see the clouds," she cried, and behold! they were a sombre purple in the north and east, streaming up to ragged edges at the zenith And as they went up the hill these hurrying streamers blotted out the sun set Suddenly the wind set the beech trees swaying and whispering, and Elizabeth shivered And then far away the lightning flashed, flashed like a sword that is drawn suddenly, and the distant thunder marched about the sky, and even as they stood astonished, pattering upon them came the first headlong raindrops of the storm In an instant the last streak of sunset was hidden by a falling curtain of hail, and the lightning flashed again, and the voice of the thunder roared louder, and all about them the world scowled dark and strange

Seizing hands, these children of the city ran down the hill to their home, in infinite astonishment And ere they reached it, Elizabeth was weeping with dismay, and the darkling ground about them was white and brittle and active with the pelting hail

Then began a strange and terrible night for them For the first time in their civilised lives they were in absolute darkness, they were wet and cold and shivering all about them hissed the hail, and through the long neglected ceilings of the derelict home came noisy spouts of water and formed pools and rivulets on the creaking floors As the gusts of the storm struck the *worn out building it groaned and shuddered and now* a mass of plaster from the wall would slide and smash, and now some loosened tile would rattle down the roof and crash into the empty greenhouse below Elizabeth shuddered, and was still, Denton wrapped his gay and flimsy city cloak about her, and so they crouched

in the darkness. And ever the thunder broke louder and nearer, and ever more lurid flashed the lightning, jerking into a momentary gaunt clearness the steaming, dripping room in which they sheltered.

Never before had they been in the open air save when the sun was shining. All their time had been spent in the warm and airy ways and halls and rooms of the latter day city. It was to them that night as if they were in some other world, some disordered chaos of stress and tumult, and almost beyond hoping that they should ever see the city ways again.

The storm seemed to last interminably, until at last they dozed between the thunderclaps, and then very swiftly it fell and ceased. And as the last patter of the rain died away they heard an unfamiliar sound.

"What is that?" cried Elizabeth.

It came again. It was the barking of dogs. It drove down the desert lane and passed, and through the window, whitening the wall before them and throwing upon it the shadow of the window frame and of a tree in black silhouette, shone the light of the waxing moon.

Just as the pale dawn was drawing the things about them into sight, the fitful barking of dogs came near again and stopped. They listened. After a pause they heard the quick pattering of feet seeking round the house, and short, half smothered barks. Then again everything was still.

"Ssh!" whispered Elizabeth, and pointed to the door of their room.

Denton went half way towards the door, and stood listening. He came back with a face of affected unconcern. "They must be the sheep dogs of the Food Company," he said. "They will do us no harm."

He sat down again beside her. "What a night it has been!" he said, to hide how keenly he was listening.

"I don't like dogs," answered Elizabeth, after a long silence.

"Dogs never hurt any one," said Denton "In the ll days—in the nineteenth century—everybody had a log"

There was a romance I heard once A dog killed a man"

Not this sort of dog," said Denton confidently Some of those romances—are exaggerated"

Suddenly a half bark and a pattering up the staircase, the sound of panting Denton sprang to his feet and drew the sword out of the damp straw upon which they had been lying Then in the doorway appeared a gaunt sheep do and halted there Behind it stared another F r an instant man and brute faced each other, hesitating

Then Denton, being ignorant of dogs, made a sharp step forward "Go away," he said, with a clumsy motion of his sword

The dog started and growled Denton stopped sharply "Good dog!" he said

The growling jerked into a bark

"Good dog!" said Denton The second dog growled and barked A third out of sight down the staircase took up the barking also Outside others gave tongue—a large number it seemed to Denton

"This is annoying," said Denton, without taking his eye off the brutes before him "Of course the shepherds won t come out of the city for hours yet Naturally these dogs don't quite make us out"

"I can't hear," shouted Elizabeth She stood up and came to him

Denton tried again, but the barking still drowned his voice The sound had a curious effect upon his blood Odd disused emotions began to stir, his face changed as he shouted He tried again the barking seemed to mock him, and one do danced a pace forward, bristling Suddenly he turned, and uttering certain words in the dialect of the underways, words incomprehensible to Elizabeth, he made for the dogs.

There was a sudden cessation of the barking, a growl and a snapping Elizabeth saw the snarling head of the foremost dog its white teeth and retracted ears, and the flash of the thrust blade The brute leapt into the air and was flung back

Then Denton, with a shout, was driving the dogs before him The sword flashed above his head with a sudden new freedom of gesture, and then he vanished down the staircase She made six steps to follow him and on the landing there was blood She stopped and hearing the tumult of dogs and Denton's shouts pass out of the house, ran to the window

Nine wolfish sheep dogs were scattering, one writhed before the porch, and Denton, tasting that strange delight of combat that slumbers still in the blood of even the most civilised man, was shouting and running across the garden space And then she saw something that for a moment he did not see The dogs circled round this way and that, and came again They had him in the open

In an instant she divined the situation She would have called to him For a moment she felt sick and helpless and then, obeying a strange impulse, she gathered up her white skirt and ran downstairs In the hall was the rusting spade That was it! She seized it and ran out

She came none too soon One dog rolled before him well nigh slashed in half, but a second had him by the thigh, a third gripped his collar behind, and a fourth had the blade of the sword between his teeth tasting its own blood He parried the leap of a fifth with his left arm

It might have been the first century instead of the twenty second, so far as she was concerned All the gentleness of her eighteen years of city life vanished before this primordial need The spade smote hard and sure, and cleft a dog's skull Another, crouching for a spring, yelped with dismay at this unexpected antagonist,

and rushed aside Two wasted precious moments on the binding of a feminine skirt

The collar of Denton's cloak tore and parted as he staggered back, and that dog too felt the spade, and ceased to trouble him He sheathed his sword in the brute at his thigh

"To the wall!" cried Elizabeth, and in three seconds the fight was at an end, and our young people stood side by side, while a remnant of five dogs, with ears and tails of disaster, fled shamefully from the stricken field

For a moment they stood panting and victorious, and then Elizabeth, dropping her spade, covered her face, and sank to the ground in a paroxysm of weeping Denton looked about him, thrust the point of his sword into the ground so that it was at hand, and stooped to comfort her

At last their more tumultuous emotions subsided and they could talk again She leant upon the wall, and he sat upon it so that he could keep an eye open for any returning dogs Two, at any rate, were up on the hillside and keeping up a vexatious barking

She was tear stained, but not very wretched now, because for half an hour he had been repeating that she was brave and had saved his life But a new fear was growing in her mind

'They are the dogs of the Food Company," she said "There will be trouble"

"I am afraid so Very likely they will prosecute us for trespass"

A pause

'In the old times," he said, "this sort of thing happened day after day"

"Last night!" she said "I could not live through another such night"

He looked at her Her face was pale for want of sleep, and drawn and haggard He came to a sudden resolution "We must go back," he said

She looked at the dead dogs, and shivered "We cannot stay here' she said

We must go back,' he repeated glancing over his shoulder to see if the enemy kept their distance "We have been happy for a time But the world is too civilised Ours is the age of cities More of this will kill us'

'But what are we to do? How can we live there?"

Denton hesitated His heel kicked against the wall on which he sat "It's a thing I haven't mentioned before he said, and coughed, "but . "

"Yes?"

"You could raise money on your expectations" he said

'Could I?" she said eagerly

"Of course you could What a child you are!"

She stood up, and her face was bright 'Why did you not tell me before?" she asked "And all this time we have been here!'

He looked at her for a moment, and smiled Then the smile vanished 'I thought it ought to come from you' he said "I didn't like to ask for your money And besides—at first I thought this would be rather fine"

There was a pause

"It *has* been fine" he said, and glanced once more over his shoulder "Until all this began"

"Yes," she said, "those first days The first three days"

They looked for a space into one another's faces, and then Denton slid down from the wall and took her hand

"To each generation," he said, "the life of its time. I see it all plainly now In the city—that is the life to which we were born To live in any other fashion Coming here was a dream, and this—is the awakening"

"'t was a pleasant dream she sa d — in the b g nn ng

F r a long space ne her spoke

"If e w uld reach he c tv before the shepherds cone l e e e m st s a sa d Den on We must ge r fod o t of the l e and eat as we g

D n glanced ab t l n aga n an l g no the dead d gs a w de l er h they va ked acr s the g r ten p e and n o the h e to e l er They f nd the va le th the r food an l les en led the blo d s a ned s a s agan In the hall El zabeth s pped One m n e sle sad Here s s e h ng l ere

She led the vay n her o n n l cl ha ne l tle h ue fl ver a l loo n ng She s ooped to s e to ched l her hand

I nt she sa d and tl en I cannot take

Imp l ely she s ooped and k s ed ts petals

l n s len l s le b s de l ev went across the e p g len pace n o l e old h gh roa l and set tl fa es esol el o va ls the l ant c v— wards c lex e l a[*] al c of l ose lat er days the c ty ha h d s va lo ved up mank nd

III.—The Ways of the City

P om nent f no paramo nt among wo ld hang ng n en ns n he h o y of man s tha se es f con r an s n l c n that began w h l e ra lway an l en ed fo a cen ry or m e h the m or and l e p e t r d Tha the e c n vance together w h the de ce of l m ed l ab l y j n s o k companes and l es pe e n f a c lt al la lo e s b sk lled men h ng n s m nerv wo l l ne es a ly con cen ra e mank n l n c es f npa allele l magn de and w k an en re rev l n n h man l fe became af er he even a h ng so ob o s that it s a matter

of astonishment it was not more clearly anticipated Yet that any steps should be taken to anticipate the miseries such a revolution might entail does not appear even to have been suggested, and the idea that the moral prohibitions and sanctions the privileges and concessions, the conception of property and responsibility of comfort and beauty, that had rendered the mainly agricultural states of the past prosperous and happy, would fail in the rising torrent of novel opportunities and novel stimulations, never seems to have entered the nineteenth century mind That a citizen, kindly and fair in his ordinary life, could as a shareholder become almost murderously greedy that commercial methods that were reasonable and honourable on the old fashioned countryside should on an enlarged scale be deadly and overwhelming that ancient charity was modern pauperisation, and ancient employment modern sweating, that, in fact a revision and enlargement of the duties and rights of man had become urgently necessary, were things it could not entertain, nourished as it was on an archaic system of education and profoundly retrospective and legal in all its habits of thought It was known that the accumulation of men in cities involved unprecedented dangers of pestilence ther was an energetic development of sanitation but that the diseases of gambling and usury, of luxury and tyranny should become endemic, and produce horrible consequences was beyond the scope of nineteenth-century thought And so, as if it were some inorganic process practically unhindered by the creative will of man, the growth of the swarming unhappy cities that mark the twenty first century accomplished itself

The new society was divided into three main classes At the summit slumbered the property owner, enormously rich by accident rather than design potent save for the will and aim the last *avatar* of Hamlet in the world Below was the enormous multitude of workers employed by the gigantic companies that monopolised control and

between these two the dwindling middle class, officials of innumerable sorts, foremen, managers, the medical, legal, artistic, and scholastic classes, and the minor rich, a middle class whose members led a life of insecure luxury and precarious speculation amidst the movements of the great managers

Already the love story and the marrying of two persons of this middle class have been told how they overcame the obstacles between them, and how they tried the simple old fashioned way of living on the countryside and came back speedily enough into the city of London Denton had no means so Elizabeth borrowed money on the securities that her father Mwres held in trust for her until she was one-and twenty

The rate of interest she paid was of course high, because of the uncertainty of her security and the arithmetic of lovers is often sketchy and optimistic Yet they had very glorious times after that return They determined they would not go to a Pleasure city nor waste their days rushing through the air from one part of the world to the other, for in spite of one disillusionment, their tastes were still old fashioned They furnished their little room with quaint old Victorian furniture, and found a shop on the forty second floor in Seventh Way where printed books of the old sort were still to be bought It was their pet affectation to read print instead of hearing phonographs And when presently there came a sweet little girl, to unite them further if it were possible, Elizabeth would not send it to a *Creche* as the custom was but insisted on nursing it at home The rent of their apartments was raised on account of this singular proceeding but that they did not mind It only meant borrowing a little more

Presently Elizabeth was of age, and Denton had a business interview with her father that was not agree able An exceedingly disagreeable interview with their

money lender followed, from which he brought home a white face On his return Elizabeth had to tell him of a new and marvellous intonation of "Goo" that their daughter had devised, but Denton was inattentive In the midst, just as she was at the cream of her description he interrupted 'How much money do you think we have left, now that everything is settled?"

She stared and stopped her appreciative swaying of the Goo genius that had accompanied her description

"You don't mean . ?"

"Yes" he answered "Ever so much We have been wild It's the interest Or something And the shares you had, slumped Your father did not mind. Said it was not his business after what had happened. He's going to marry again . . . Well—we have scarcely a thousand left!"

"Only a thousand?"

"Only a thousand"

And Elizabeth sat down For a moment she regarded him with a white face, then her eyes went about the quaint old fashioned room, with its middle Victorian furniture and genuine oleographs, and rested at last on the little lump of humanity within her arms

Denton glanced at her and stood downcast Then he swung round on his heel and walked up and down very rapidly

"I must get something to do," he broke out presently "I am an idle scoundrel I ought to have thought of this before I have been a selfish fool I wanted to be with you all day "

He stopped, looking at her white face Suddenly he came and kissed her and the little face that nestled against her breast

"It's all right, dear," he said, standing over her, "you won't be lonely now—now Dines is beginning to talk to you And I can soon get something to do, you know Soon . . . Easily . . . It's only a shock

at first B t t s ll come all r ght It s sure to come r ght I s ll go ut aga n as soon as I have re e l and find what can be d ne For the present it s hard to h nk f an th ng

It wo ld be hard to leave these rooms sa d El za bet h t—

The e on t be any need of that—trust me"

"They are expens ve

D n wa ed that a de He began talking of the wo k he co ld do He was not very expl c t hat t w ld be b t he was q te s e that there was some th ng o ke p them comfor ably n the happy m ddle cla h se ay of l fe as he only one th y knew

Th re are three and th rty m ll on people in Lon n he sa d some of them *ust* have need of e

Some *m st*

The tr uble is *Well—B ndon* that brown l t le old man yo r father wanted yo to marry He s an mp r an person I can t go back to my fl ng s age wo k beca se he is now a Comm ss oner of the Fly ng S age C erks

I d ln t kno v that sa d El zabeth

He as ma le th at in the last few weeks o th ngs wo ld be e sy eno gh for they l ke n e on the fly ng s a e B t there s dozens of o her th ngs to be done l ens D n t ou o ry d ar I ll rest a l ttle h le and then we ll d ne and hen I ll s art on my ro nds I kno y lo of pe ple—lots

So they reste l and then they went to the publ c d n ng r om and d ned an l then he started on h s *search for emplo ment B t they soon real ed that in* the mat er of one conven ence the world was j st as badly off as t had ever been and that was a n ce sec re hono rable rem nera ve employment leav ng ample e s re for the pr vate l fe and demand ng no special ab l ty no v olent exert on nor r sk and no sacr fice of any sort for its atta nment He e olved a number

of brilliant projects, and spent many days hurrying from one part of the enormous city to another in search of influential friends, and all his influential friends were glad to see him, and very sanguine until it came to definite proposals, and then they became guarded and vague He would part with them coldly, and think over their behaviour, and get irritated on his way back, and stop at some telephone office and spend money on an animated but unprofitable quarrel And as the days passed, he got so worried and irritated that even to seem kind and careless before Elizabeth cost him an effort—as she, being a loving woman, perceived very clearly

After an extremely complex preface one day, she helped him out with a painful suggestion He had expected her to weep and give way to despair when it came to selling all their joyfully bought early Victorian treasures, their quaint objects of art, their antimacassars, bead mats, repp curtains, veneered furniture, gold-framed steel engravings and pencil drawings wax flowers under shades, stuffed birds, and all sorts of choice old things, but it was she who made the proposal The sacrifice seemed to fill her with pleasure, and so did the idea of shifting to apartments ten or twelve floors lower in another hotel "So long as Dings is with us, nothing matters," she said "It's all experience" So he kissed her, said she was braver than when she fought the sheep dogs, called her Boadicea, and abstained very carefully from reminding her that they would have to pay a considerably higher rent on account of the little voice with which Dings greeted the perpetual uproar of the city

His idea had been to get Elizabeth out of the way when it came to selling the absurd furniture about which their affections were twined and tangled, but when it came to the sale it was Elizabeth who haggled with the dealer while Denton went about the running ways of the city, white and sick with sorrow and

the fear of what was still to come When they moved into their sparsely furnished pink and white apartments in a cheap hotel there came an outbreak of f ri s energy on his part, and then nearly a week of lethargy during which he sulked at home Through those days Elizabeth shone like a star and at the end Denton's misery found a vent in tears And then he went out into the city ways again and—to his utter amazement—*found some work to do*

His standard of employment had fallen steadily until at last it had reached the lowest level of independent workers At first he had aspired to some high official position in the great Flying or Windvane or Water Companies or to an appointment on one of the General Intelligence Organisations that had replaced newspapers, or to some professional partnership but those were the dreams of the beginning From that he had passed to speculation and three hundred gold 'Lions' out of Elizabeth's thousand had vanished one evening in the share market Now he was glad his good looks secured him a trial in the position of salesman to the Suzannah Hat Syndicate a Syndicate dealing in ladies caps hair decorations and hats—for though the city was completely covered in ladies still wore extremely elaborate and beautiful hats at the theatres and places of public worship

It would have been amusing if one could have con*fronted a Regent Street shopkeeper of the nineteenth* century with the development of his establishment in which Denton's duties lay Nineteenth Way was still sometimes called Regent Street, but it was now a street of moving platforms and nearly eight hundred feet wide The middle space was immovable and gave *access by staircases descending into subterranean ways* to the houses on either side Right and left were an ascending series of continuous platforms each of which travelled about five miles an hour faster than the one internal to it, so that one could step from platform to

platform until one reached the swiftest outer way and so go about the city The establishment of the Suzannah Hat Syndicate projected a vast *façade* upon the outer way, sending out overhead at either end an overlapping series of huge white glass screens, on which gigantic animated pictures of the faces of well known beautiful living women wearing novelties in hats were thrown A dense crowd was always collected in the stationary central way watching a vast kinematograph which displayed the changing fashion The whole front of the building was in perpetual chromatic change, and all down the *façade*—four hundred feet it measured—and all across the street of moving ways, laced and winked and glittered in a thousand varieties of colour and lettering the inscription—

SUZANNA! 'ETS! SUZANNA! 'ETS!

A broadside of gigantic phonographs drowned all conversation in the moving way and roared "*hats*" at the passer by, while far down the street and up, other batteries counselled the public to "walk down for Suzannah," and queried, "Why *don't* you buy the girl a hat?"

For the benefit of those who chanced to be deaf—and deafness was not uncommon in the London of that age, inscriptions of all sizes were thrown from the roof above upon the moving platforms themselves and on one's hand or on the bald head of the man before one, or on a lady's shoulders, or in a sudden jet of flame before one's feet, the moving finger wrote in unanticipated letters of fire "*'ets r chip t'de*," or simple "*'ets*" And spite of all these efforts so high was the pitch at which the city lived, so trained became one's eyes and ears to ignore all sorts of advertisement, that many a citizen had passed that place thousands of times and was still unaware of the existence of the *Suzannah* Hat Syndicate

To enter the building one descended the staircase in the middle way and walked through a public passage in which pretty girls promenaded, girls who were willing to wear a ticketed hat for a small fee The entrance chamber was a large hall in which wax heads fashionably adorned rotated gracefully upon pedestals, and from this one passed through a cash office to an interminable series of little rooms, each room with its salesman, its three or four hats and pins, its mirrors, its kinematographs, telephones and hat slides in communication with the central depôt, its comfortable lounge and tempting refreshments A salesman in such an apartment did Denton now become It was his business to attend to any of the incessant stream of ladies who chose to stop with him, to behave as winningly as possible, to offer refreshment, to converse on any topic the possible customer chose, and to guide the conversation dexterously but not insistently towards hats He was to suggest trying on various types of hat and to show by his manner and bearing, but without any coarse flattery, the enhanced impression made by the hats he wished to sell He had several mirrors, adapted by various subtleties of curvature and tint to different types of face and complexion, and much depended on the proper use of these

Denton flung himself at these curious and not very congenial duties with a good will and energy that would have amazed him a year before, but all to no purpose The Senior Manageress, who had selected him for appointment and conferred various small marks of favour upon him, suddenly changed in her manner, declared

took that small person to one of the public *creches* that

abounded in the city That was the common use of the time The industrial emancipation of women the correlated disorganisation of the secluded "home,' had rendered *creches* a necessity for all but very rich and exceptionally minded people Therein children en countered hygienic and educational advantages im possible without such organisation *Creches* were of all classes and types of luxury, down to those of the Labour Company, where children were taken on credit, to be redeemed in labour as they grew up

But both Denton and Elizabeth being, as I have explained strange old fashioned young people, full of nineteenth century ideas, hated these convenient *creches* exceedingly and at last took their little daughter to one with extreme reluctance They were received by a motherly person in a uniform who was very brisk and prompt in her manner until Elizabeth wept at the mention of parting from her child The motherly person, after a brief astonishment at this unusual emotion, changed suddenly into a creature of hope and comfort and so won Elizabeth's gratitude for life They were conducted into a vast room presided over by several nurses and with hundreds of two year old girls grouped about the toy covered floor This was the Two year old Room Two nurses came forward, and Elizabeth watched their bearing towards Dings with jealous eyes They were kind—it was clear they felt kind, and yet

Presently it was time to go By that time Dings was happily established in a corner, sitting on the floor with her arms filled and herself, indeed, for the most part hidden by an unaccustomed wealth of toys She seemed careless of all human relationships as her parents receded

They were forbidden to upset her by saying good bye

At the door Elizabeth glanced back for the last time, and behold! Dings had dropped her new wealth and

was standing with a dubious face Suddenly Elizabeth gasped and the motherly nurse pushed her forward and closed the door

"You can come again soon, dear," she said, with unexpected tenderness in her eyes For a moment Elizabeth stared at her with a blank face "You can come again soon," repeated the nurse Then with a swift transition Elizabeth was weeping in the nurse's arms So it was that Denton's heart was won also

And three weeks after our young people were absolutely penniless, and only one way lay open They must go to the Labour Company So soon as the rent was a week overdue their few remaining possessions were seized, and with scant courtesy they were shown the way out of the hotel Elizabeth walked along the

n

y

e

as he overtook her and together they ascended to the middle way in silence There they found two seats vacant and sat down

"We need not go there—*yet*?" said Elizabeth

"No—not till we are hungry" said Denton

They said no more

Elizabeth's eyes sought a resting place and found none To the right roared the eastward ways to the left the ways in the opposite direction, swarming with people Backwards and forwards along a cable overhead rushed a string of gesticulating men, dressed like clowns, each marked on back and chest with one gigantic letter, so that altogether they spelt out

"Purkinje's Digestive Pills"

An anæmic little woman in horrible coarse blue canvas pointed a little girl to one of this string of hurrying advertisements

"Look!" said the anæmic woman "there's yer father"

"Which?" said the little girl

"'Im wiv his nose coloured red," said the anæmic woman

The little girl began to cry, and Elizabeth could have cried too

"Aint 'e kickin' 'is legs!—*just!*" said the anæmic woman in blue, trying to make things bright again "Looky—*now!*"

On the *façade* to the right a huge intensely bright disc of weird colour span incessantly, and letters of fire that came and went spelt out—

"DOES THIS MAKE YOU GIDDY?"

Then a pause, followed by

"TAKE A PURKINJE'S DIGESTIVE PILL"

A vast and desolating braying began "If you love Swagger Literature, put your telephone on to Bragles, the Greatest Author of all Time The Greatest Thinker of all Time Teaches you Morals up to your Scalp! The very image of Socrates, except the back of his head which is like Shakespeare He has six toes dresses in red and never cleans his teeth Hear Him!"

Denton's voice became audible in a gap in the uproar "I never ought to have married you," he was saying "I have wasted your money, ruined you, brought you to misery I am a scoundrel Oh, this accursed world!"

She tried to speak, and for some moments could not She grasped his hand "No" she said at last

A half formed desire suddenly became determination She stood up "Will you come?"

He rose also "We need not go there yet"

"Not that But I want you to come to the flying stages—where we met You know? The little seat"

He hesitated. "Can you?" he said doubtfully.
"Yes," she answered.
He hesitated still for a moment, then moved to obey her will.

And so it was they spent their last half day of freedom t n e the open air n the l tle seat under the fl ng s ges here he had been ont to meet five s veas a There she t ll h m hat she co ld n t tell h n le t n l s p ble was that she d d n r p n e n n v of their marriage—that whatever d scomf and m erv l fe s ll had for them she s c nten h the th n s that had been. The weather was k n d to them, the seat was s nl t and a and overhead the sl n ng aeroplanes went and came.

At last towards sunsetting their time was at an end and h v a le their ows to one another and claped hands and then r se p and wen h k n o the avs of the c v a shabby looking heavy he r e l pa r t red and h n rv. Soon the c n ne to one of the pale blue s ns l marked a L r Company B rea. For a space they stood n the m l lle way r o r l no h s and at last des en led and entered the a no r e n

The Labour Company had or nally been a charitable an sat on s a n as to s pp f o l shelter and v k to all comers. This t was bo n d to do by the n l t ons of its incorporation, and it was also bo n d to s pply food and shelter and medical attendance to all incapable of work. To close to demand its a d. In exchange these incapables pa d l bo r notes wh ch they had to redeem pon recovery. They s gned these lab r no es v th th n b marks, wh h were photographed and indexed n s ch a way that th s v rl l v de Labour Company co l l den fy any one of its two or three h n lred m ll n cl ents at the cost of an hour's inq rv. The days labour as defined as t o spells in a treadm ll sed n generat ng electrical force or its equivalent, and its due performance could be enforced

by law In practice the Labour Company found it advisable to add to its statutory obligations of food and shelter a few pence a day as an inducement to effort, and its enterprise had not only abolished pauperisation altogether, but supplied practically all but the very highest and most responsible labour throughout the world Nearly a third of the population of the world were its serfs and debtors from the cradle to the grave

In this practical, unsentimental way the problem of the unemployed had been most satisfactorily met and overcome No one starved in the public ways, and no rags no costume less sanitary and sufficient than the Labour Company's hygienic but inelegant blue canvas pained the eye throughout the whole world It was the constant theme of the phonographic newspapers how much the world had progressed since nineteenth century days when the bodies of those killed by the vehicular traffic or dead of starvation, were, they alleged a common feature in all the busier streets

Denton and Elizabeth sat apart in the waiting room until their turn came Most of the others collected there seemed limp and taciturn but three or four young people gaudily dressed made up for the quietude of their companions They were life clients of the Company, born in the Company's *creche* and destined to die in its hospital, and they had been out for a spree with some shillings or so of extra pay They talked vociferously in a later development of the Cockney dialect manifestly very proud of themselves

Elizabeth's eyes went from these to the less assertive figures One seemed exceptionally pitiful to her I was a woman of perhaps forty five with gold stained hair and a painted face, down which abundant tears had trickled she had a pinched nose, hungry eyes lean hands and shoulders, and her dusty worn-out finery told the story of her life Another was a grey bearded old man in the costume of a bishop of one of the high episcopal sects—for religion was now also a busi

ness, and had its ups and downs And beside him a sickly, dissipated looking boy of perhaps two and twenty glared at Fate

Presently Elizabeth and then Denton interviewed the manageress—for the Company preferred women in this capacity—and found she possessed an energetic face, a contemptuous manner, and a particularly unpleasant voice They were given various cheques, including one to certify that they need not have their heads cropped, and when they had given their thumb marks, learnt the number corresponding thereunto, and exchanged their shabby middle class clothes for duly numbered blue canvas suits, they repaired to the huge plain dining room for their first meal under these new conditions Afterwards they were to return to her for instructions about their work

When they had made the exchange of their clothing Elizabeth did not seem able to look at Denton at first, but he looked at her, and saw with astonishment that even in blue canvas she was still beautiful And then their soup and bread came sliding on its little rail down the long table towards them and stopped with a jerk, and he forgot the matter For they had had no proper meal for three days

After they had dined they rested for a time Neither talked—there was nothing to say, and presently they got up and went back to the manageress to learn what they had to do

The manageress referred to a tablet "Y'r rooms won't be here, it'll be in the Highbury Ward, ninety seventh way, number two thousand and seventeen Better make a note of it on y'r card *You* nought nought nought, type seven, sixty four, b c d, *gamma* forty-one, female, you 'ave to go to the Metal beating Company and try that for a day—fourpence bonus if ye're satisfactory, and *you*, nought seven one, type four, seven hundred and nine, g f b, *pi* five and ninety male, you 'ave to go to the Photographic Company on

Eighty first way, and learn something or other—*I* don't know—thrippence 'Ere's y'r cards That's all Next! *What?* Didn't catch it all? Lor! So suppose I must go over it all again Why don't you listen? Heedless, unprovident people! One'd think these things didn't matter"

Their ways to their work lay together for a time. And now they found they could talk Curiously enough, the worst of their depression seemed over now that they had actually donned the blue Denton could talk with interest even of the work that lay before them "Whatever it is," he said, "it can't be so hateful as that hat shop And after we have paid for Dings, we shall still have a whole penny a day between us even now Afterwards—we may improve,—get more money"

Elizabeth was less inclined to speech "I wonder why work should seem so hateful," she said.

"It's odd," said Denton "I suppose it wouldn't be if it were not the thought of being ordered about . . . I hope we shall have decent managers"

Elizabeth did not answer. She was not thinking of that. She was tracing out some thoughts of *her* own

"Of course," she said presently, "we have been *using* up work all our lives It's only fair—"

She stopped It was too intricate

"We paid for it," said Denton, for at that *time* he had not troubled himself about these *complicated* things.

"We did nothing—and yet we paid for it. That's what I cannot understand"

"Perhaps we are paying," said Elizabeth *presently*—for her theology was old-fashioned and simple.

Presently it was time for them to part, and each went to the appointed work. Denton's was to mind a complicated hydraulic press that seemed almost an intelligent thing This press worked by the sea water

that was des ned finally to fl sh the c ty drains—for the w r l t d l no since abandoned the folly of pouring d n able water into s sewers This water was br c me to the eastward ed e of the city by a h ge cana and then ra ed by an enormous battery of p mp o res r rs at a le el of fo r hundred feet above the sea fr m h ch t spread by a b ll on arterial branches o r the c Thence it poured down cleansing s ng w rking machinery of all sorts thro h an nfin e a e s of capillary channels in o the great drains the a ae max mae and so carried the sewage o t to he a r cultural areas that surrounded London on every s de

The press was e ploy d in one of the processes of the pl t graph c m n fac re b t the nature of the process it d d not concern Denton to understand The most sal ent fact to h s m nd was that it had to be con d cted n r by l gl t an l as a consequence he room in wh ch he worked was l t by one colo red globe that po red a l rid and painful ill m nat on about the room In the darkest corner s ood the press whose servant Dent n had now become it was a huge dim gl tter ing th n th a project ng hood that had a remote resemblance to a bowed head an l sq att ng l ke some metal B ddha in th s we rd l ght that m n tered to its needs t seemed to Denton in certa n moods almost as f t l s must needs be the obsc re idol to wh ch human ty in some strange aberrat on had offered up h s life H s d t es had a varied monotony S ch items as the follo ng will convey an idea of the service of the press. The t ng s o ked s th a busy cl cking so long as th ngs went well b t if the pas e that came pour ng thro gh a feeder from another room and wh ch it was perpet ally compress ng into th n plates changed in q al ty the rhythm of its cl ck altered and Denton hastened to make certa n adj stments The sl ghtest delay involved a waste of paste and the dock ng of one or more of his da ly pence If the supply of paste

waned—there were hand processes of a peculiar sort involved in its preparation, and sometimes the workers had convulsions which deranged their output—Denton had to throw the press out of gear. In the painful vigilance a multitude of such trivial attentions entailed, painful because of the incessant effort its absence of natural interest required, Denton had now to pass one third of his days. Save for an occasional visit from the manager, a kindly but singularly foul mouthed man, Denton passed his working hours in solitude.

Elizabeth's work was of a more social sort. There was a fashion for covering the private apartments of the very wealthy with metal plates beautifully embossed with repeated patterns. The taste of the time demanded, however, that the repetition of the patterns should not be exact—not mechanical, but "natural"—and it was found that the most pleasing arrangement of pattern irregularity was obtained by employing women of refinement and natural taste to punch out the patterns with small dies. So many square feet of plates was exacted from Elizabeth as a minimum, and for whatever square feet she did in excess she received a small payment. The room, like most rooms of women workers, was under a manageress: men had been found by the Labour Company not only less exacting but extremely liable to excuse favoured ladies from a proper share of their duties. The manageress was a not unkindly, taciturn person, with the hardened remains of beauty of the brunette type, and the other women workers, who of course hated her, associated her name scandalously with one of the metal work directors in order to explain her position.

Only two or three of Elizabeth's fellow workers were born labour serfs, plain, morose girls, but most of them corresponded to what the nineteenth century would have called a "reduced" gentlewoman. But the ideal of what constituted a gentlewoman had altered: the faint, faded, negative virtue, the modulated voice and

restrained gesture of the old fashioned gentlewoman had vanished from the earth Most of her companions showed in discoloured hair ruined complexions, and the texture of their reminiscent conversations the vanished glories of a conquering youth All of these artistic workers were much older than Elizabeth and *two openly expressed their surprise that any one so* young and pleasant should come to share their toil But Elizabeth did not trouble them with her old world moral conceptions

They were permitted and even encouraged to converse with each other for the directors very properly judged that anything that conduced to variations of mood made *for pleasing* fluctuations in their patterning, and Elizabeth was almost forced to hear the stories of these lives with which her own interwove garbled and distorted they were by vanity indeed and yet comprehensible enough And soon she began to appreciate the small spites and cliques the little misunderstandings and alliances that enmeshed about her One woman was excessively garrulous and descriptive about a wonderful son of hers another had cultivated a foolish coarseness of speech, that she seemed to regard as the wittiest expression of originality conceivable a third mused for ever on dress, and whispered to Elizabeth how she saved her pence day after day, and would presently have a glorious day of freedom, wearing and then followed hours of description two others sat always together, and called one another pet names, until one day some little thing happened, and they sat apart, blind and deaf as it seemed to one another's being And always from them all came an incessant tap, tap tap, tap and the manageress listened always to the rhythm to mark if one fell away Tap, tap, tap, tap so their days passed so their lives must pass Elizabeth sat among them, kindly and quiet, gray hearted, marvelling at Fate tap tap, tap tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap

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s ccess on of lal or o s davs that har lened the r hands wove strange tl reads of s e n w and s er r s ls ne into tle s f prett ness o tle l s an l ew g a e l nes and sha l ws on the r faces The h lt e n ven en wa s of tle for er l fe ha l rece led to an n access ble l stance slowly tl v learnt the l sson f the t nder world—s nbre and lal r s vast an l p e nant Tl ere were many l ttle tl n s happene l tl n s hat w ld be te l o s an l m serable to tell th ngs tl t ere b ter and gr evo s to l ear—n l g n s t rannes s h as m st e r seas n the bread f tle p r s c es an l ne th ng tl at was not l tle b t seemed l ke the er blacken ng of life to tl e n l cb tl at l e cl ld they l ad g ven l fe to s ckened an l led B t l at s ry tl at anc nt perpet ally rec r g s y has been t ld so often l as b en t ld s bea lle tl at tl ere s no ne d to tell t o er aga n l re I ere was tle same sl arp fear the sa e l ng anx e be deferred inev table l lo v and tle black s len e I l s al vays been the sa ne at w ll always be tl e sa ne It is one of the tl ngs that st be

An l it was El zabeth wl o was the first to spe k after an acl no l ll i terspace of da s n t end of the f l sh l t le name tl at was a na ne n l n r b t of the dark n s tl at broode l over her s l ller l ad c me tl r h the sl r ek ng t l s was a the cr v t e l er the clam r of tra le of sell ng c m pet t ve rel g ns of pol t cal appeal had bea n d af cars tl e glare f l sc d l gl s of dan ng let ers and fiery advert e e ts l ad fallen p n the s ver able faces unhee led Tl ey t k the r l nner n k d n ng l all at a place apart I want a l El beth cl ns lv to go o t to the flying sta es—o t a seat Here one can sav n tl ng

Denton looked at l er " It will be n ght" h said

I have aske l — t is a fine n ht" she s r d

He perceived sl e co ld find no words to exp n

herself Suddenly he understood that she wished to see the stars once more the stars they had watched together from the open downland in that wild honeymoon of theirs five years ago Something caught at his throat He looked away from her

"There will be plenty of time to go," he said, in a matter-of fact tone

And at last they came out to their little seat on the flying stage and sat there for a long time in silence The little seat was in shadow but the zenith was pale blue with the effulgence of the stage overhead, and all the city spread below them, squares and circles and patches of brilliance caught in a mesh work of light The little stars seemed very faint and small near as they had been to the old world watcher they had become now infinitely remote Yet one could see them in the darkened patches amidst the glare, and especially in the northward sky, the ancient constellations gliding *steadfast and patient about the pole*

Long our two people sat in silence, and at last Elizabeth sighed

"If I understood," she said, "if I could understand When one is down there the city seems everything—the noise, the hurry, the voices—you must live, you must scramble Here—it is nothing, a thing that passes One can think in peace"

"Yes" said Denton "How flimsy it all is! From here more than half of it is swallowed by the night It will pass"

"We shall pass first" said Elizabeth

"I know," said Denton "If life were not a moment, the whole of history would seem like the happening of a day Yes—we shall pass And the city will pass and all the things that are to come Man and the Overman and wonders unspeakable And yet "

He paused, and then began afresh "I know what you feel At least I fancy Down there one thinks *of one's work, one's little vexations and pleasures, one's*

eating and drinking and ease and pain One lives and one must die Down there and everyday—our sorrow seemed the end of life

"Up here it is different For instance, down there it would seem impossible almost to go on living if one were horribly disfigured, horribly crippled, disgraced Up here—under these stars—none of those things would matter They don't matter They are a part of something One seems just to touch that something—under the stars "

He stopped The vague, impalpable things in his mind, cloudy emotions half shaped towards ideas vanished before the rough grasp of words "It is hard to express," he said lamely

They sat through a long stillness

"It is well to come here," he said at last "We stop—our minds are very finite After all we are just poor animals rising out of the brute, each with a mind the poor beginning of a mind We are so stupid So much hurts And yet "

I know, I know—and some day we shall *see*

"All this frightful stress, all this discord will resolve to harmony, and we shall know it Nothing is but it makes for that Nothing All the failures—every little thing makes for that harmony Everything is necessary to it, we shall find We shall find Nothing, not even the most dreadful thing, could be left out Not even the most trivial Every tap of your hammer on the brass every moment of work, my idleness even Dear one! every movement of our poor little one All these things go on for ever And the faint impalpable things We, sitting here together—Every thing

"The passion that joined us, and what has come since It is not passion now More than anything else it is sorrow *Dear* "

He could say no more, could follow his thoughts no further

Elizabeth made no answer—she was very still, but presently her hand sought his and found it

IV—Underneath

Under the stars one may reach upward and touch resignation, whatever the evil thing may be but in the heat and stress of the day's work we lapse again, come disgust and anger and intolerable moods How little is all our magnanimity—an accident! a phase! The very Saints of old had first to flee the world And Denton and his Elizabeth could not flee their world, no longer were there open roads to unclaimed lands where men might live freely—however hardly—and keep their souls in peace The city had swallowed up mankind

For a time these two Labour Serfs were kept at their original occupations, she at her brass stamping and Denton at his press and then came a move for him that brought with it fresh and still bitterer experiences of life in the underways of the great city He was transferred to the care of a rather more elaborate press in the central factory of the London Tile Trust

In this new situation he had to work in a long vaulted room with a number of other men, for the most part born Labour Serfs He came to this intercourse reluctantly His upbringing had been refined and, until his ill fortune had brought him to that costume, he had never spoken in his life, except by way of command or some immediate necessity, to the white faced wearers of the blue canvas Now at last came contact, he had to work beside them, share their tools eat with them To both Elizabeth and himself this seemed a further degradation

His taste would have seemed extreme to a man of the nineteenth century But slowly and inevitably in the intervening years a gulf had opened between the

vearers of the blue canvas and the classes above, a difference not simply of circumstances and habits of life but of habits of thought—even of language The underways had developed a dialect of their own above, too had arisen a dialect, a code of thought, a language of "culture," which aimed by a sedulous search after fresh distinction to widen perpetually the space between itself and "vulgarity" The bond of a common faith moreover, no longer held the race together The last years of the nineteenth century were distinguished by the rapid development among the prosperous idle of esoteric perversions of the popular religion glosses and interpretations that reduced the broad teachings of the carpenter of Nazareth to the exquisite narrowness of their lives And, spite of their inclination towards the ancient fashion of living, neither Elizabeth nor Denton had been sufficiently original to escape the suggestion of their surroundings In matters of common behaviour they had followed the ways of their class, and so when they fell at last to be Labour Serfs it seemed to them almost as though they were falling among offensive inferior animals, they felt as a nineteenth century duke and duchess might have felt who were forced to take rooms in the Jago

Th [illegible] "*distance*" But [illegible] n from his new [illegible] *He had* [illegible] about Serf imag[illegible] that his fall to the pos[illegible] was the end of his lesson, that when their little *daughter* had died he had plumbed the deeps of life, *but indeed* these things were only the beginning Life demands something more from us than acquiescence *And now* in a roomful of machine minders he was to *learn a wider* lesson, to make the acquaintance of another factor in life, a factor as elemental as the loss of things *dear to us*, more elemental even than toil

His quiet discouragement of conversation was an immediate cause of offence—was interpreted, rightly

n ch I fear as d lan His gnorance of the v gar c a tl ng p n l l he lad h her n pr led h self s ll n v k n elf a new aspe t He le l o p r c e a n at h s recep n of l e coarse p l h g nal n n lei ren k ha g eeted n a n e n t l a e s ung t e k rs of these a l ke b s n l faces D n t unler le sa d ra ler coldly and at lazard No vo

I an ho had addressed h m stare l scowled and l away

\ l ho al f le l a Den on s nacc omed a k e r h e o peat l s a k and Den on l l e a l ng ff re l le se f an l can l l p l e nks an l l s c n f n n e n b p n a pe ng c n t n D n n he l ha l h n a ll an l le wan e l to know e ea he bl e H rl expec ed ng e rl of v e an l ex a ag n e Had D e e l een a a Pl a re C D n on was l l h v he e en e hese w n ler l f i p n te l an l e l he l gl t of e n n h pefess o kers of the n l

l a c e pe amen re en ed he e q e ons H l N c l The nan pe e l w h a e p on l q es n an l th s t ne t vas Den on w l v

(n v s l h s nterloc o m ch aston hed l p e n l f r l elf p n D n n m n l hat h ka e c n e sa on a hen repeate l n l n n ne n es np l es an l hat e r e o a n l ent an l n e l la gh er They l l a D n n h man f lv enhan e l n erest A s p n of a la n da ne l pon h m He l t nk of h s press and ts unfam l ar pec l e

The macl nes kept everybody pretty busy dur ng th-

first spell, and then came a recess It was only an interval for refreshment, too brief for any one to go out to a Labour Company dining room Denton followed his fellow workers into a short gallery, in which were a number of bins and refuse from the presses

Each man produced a packet of food Denton had no packet The manager, a careless young man who held his position by influence, had omitted to warn Denton that it was necessary to apply for this provision He stood apart, feeling hungry The others drew together in a group and talked in undertones glancing at him ever and again He became uneasy His appearance of disregard cost him an increasing effort He tried to think of the levers of his new press

Presently one, a man shorter but much broader and stouter than Denton came forward to him Denton turned to him as unconcernedly as possible "Here!" said the delegate—as Denton judged him to be—extending a cube of bread in a not too clean hand He had a swart, broad nosed face, and his mouth hung down towards one corner

Denton felt doubtful for the instant whether this was meant for civility or insult His impulse was to decline 'No thanks" he said and at the man's change of expression "I'm not hungry"

There came a laugh from the group behind 'Told you so' said the man who had offered Denton the loan of an oil can "He's top side he is You ain't good enough for 'im"

The swart face grew a shade darker

"Here said its owner, still extending the bread and speaking in a lower tone 'you got to eat this. See

Denton looked into the threatening face before him and odd little currents of energy seemed to be running through his limbs and body

"I don't want it," he said trying a pleasant smile that twitched and failed

The thickset man advanced his face, and the bread became a physical threat in his hand Denton's mind rushed together to the one problem of his antagonist's eyes

"Eat it," said the swart man

There came a pause, and then they both moved quickly The cube of bread described a complicated path a curve that would have ended in Denton's face, and then his fist hit the wrist of the hand that gripped it and it flew upward, and out of the conflict—its part played

He stepped back quickly, fists clenched and arms tense The hot, dark countenance receded, became an alert hostility, watching its chance Denton for one instant felt confident, and strangely buoyant and serene His heart beat quickly He felt his body alive, and glowing to the tips

"Scrap boys!" shouted some one, and then the dark figure had leapt forward, ducked back and sideways, and come in again Denton struck out, and was hit One of his eyes seemed to him to be demolished, and he felt a soft lip under his fist just before he was hit again—this time under the chin A huge fan of fiery needles shot open He had a momentary persuasion that his head was knocked to pieces, and then something hit his head and back from behind and the fight became an uninteresting, an impersonal thing

He was aware that time—seconds or minutes—had passed abstract, uneventful time He was lying with his head in a heap of ashes, and something wet and warm ran swiftly into his neck The first shock broke up into discrete sensations All his head throbbed, his eye and his chin throbbed exceedingly, and the taste of blood was in his mouth

"He's all right," said a voice "He's opening his eyes

"Serve him——well right," said a second

His mates were standing about him He made an

effort and sat up He put his hand to the back of his head, and his hair was wet and full of cinders A laugh greeted the gesture His eye was partially closed He perceived what had happened His momentary anticipation of a final victory had vanished.

"Looks surprised," said some one

"'Ave any more?" said a wit, and then, imitating Denton's refined accent "No, thank you"

Denton perceived the swart man with a blood stained handkerchief before his face, and somewhat in the background

"Where's that bit of bread he's got to eat?" said a little ferret faced creature, and sought with his foot in the ashes of the adjacent bin

Denton had a moment of internal debate He knew the code of honour requires a man to pursue a fight he has begun to the bitter end, but this was his first taste of the bitterness He was resolved to rise again, but he felt no passionate impulse It occurred to him—and the thought was no very violent spur—that he was perhaps after all a coward For a moment his will was heavy a lump of lead

"'Ere it is" said the little ferret faced man, and stooped to pick up a cindery cube He looked at Denton, then at the others

Slowly, unwillingly, Denton stood up

A dirty faced albino extended a hand to the ferret faced man

"Gimme that toke," he said He advanced threateningly, bread in hand, to Denton "So you ain't 'ad your bellyful yet," he said "Eh?"

Now it was coming "No, I haven't," said Denton, with a catching of the breath and resolved to try this brute behind the ear before he himself got stunned again He knew he would be stunned again He was astonished how ill he had judged himself beforehand A few ridiculous lunges, and down he would go again He watched the albino's eyes The albino was grin-

ning confidently l ke a man ι ho plans an agreeable tr ck A s lden perception of impending indignities stung Denton

Yo ι leave ιm alone Jim sa d the swart man s d lenly over the blood stained rag He a n t done noth ng to yo

The alb no s gr n van shed He stopped He looked from one to the other It seemed to Denton that the s va man deman led the priv lege of h s destruc tion The alb no vo l l have been better

Yo leave n alone sa d the s vart man "See? E s a l s l cks

A clatter ng bell l fted ι p ts vo ce and solved the s a on The alb no he ated *I cky for you'* he sa d add ng a fo l metapl or and t rned w h the othe s to vards tl e press roo at n W a t for the end of tl e pell mate sa d tl e all no over h s sho l ler —an afterthoιgl t Tl e s art man va te l f r the alb n to precede h m Denton real sed that he had a rep eve

I l e men passe l to var ls an open door Denton beca ne a vare of h s d es and l r ed to jo n the ta l f he q e e At tl e l or vay of tl e va l e l gallery of p esses a yello v n for ned lab r p l ce nan stood t ck ng a card He had ignored the s vart man s har no rhage

H ry p the e he sa d to Denton

Hello he sa l at tl e s ght of h s fac al d sarray Who s been h t ng *you?*

That s my affa r sa d Denton

Not if it sp les yo r ork ιt a n t sa d the man in yellow Yo m nd that

Denton made no ans er He was a ro gh—a labo rer He vore the bl e canvas The laws of assa lt and battery he kne v were not for tl e l kes of him He went to h s p ess

He co l l feel the sk n of h s brow and ch n and head lifting themselves to noble bruises felt the throb

and pain of each aspiring contusion His nervous system slid down to lethargy, at each movement in his press adjustment he felt he lifted a weight And as for his honour—that too throbbed and puffed How *did he stand?* What precisely had happened in the last ten minutes? What would happen next? He knew that there was enormous matter for thought, and he could not think save in disordered snatches

His mood was a sort of stagnant astonishment All his conceptions were overthrown He had regarded his security from physical violence as inherent, as one of the conditions of life So, indeed, it had been while he wore his middle class costume, had his middle-class property to serve for his defence But who would interfere among Labour roughs fighting together? And indeed in those days no man would In the Under world there was no law between man and man, the law and machinery of the state had become for them something that held men down, fended them off from much desirable property and pleasure, and that was all Violence, that ocean in which the brutes live for ever, and from which a thousand dykes and contrivances have won our hazardous civilised life, had flowed in again upon the sinking underways and submerged them The fist ruled Denton had come right down at last to the elemental—fist and trick and the stubborn heart and fellowship—even as it was in the beginning

The rhythm of his machine changed, and his thoughts were interrupted

Presently he could think again Strange how quickly things had happened! He bore these men who had thrashed him no very vivid ill will He was bruised and enlightened He saw with absolute fairness now the reasonableness of his unpopularity He had behaved like a fool Disdain, seclusion are the privilege of the strong The fallen aristocrat still clinging to his pointless distinction is surely the most pitiful

creature of pretence in all this clamant universe Good heavens! what was there for him to despise in these men?

What a pity he had not appreciated all this better five hours ago!

What would happen at the end of the spell? He could not tell He could not imagine He could not imagine the thoughts of these men He was sensible only of their hostility and utter want of sympathy Vague possibilities of shame and violence chased one another across his mind Could he devise some weapon? He recalled his assault upon the hypnotist, but there were no detachable lamps here He could see nothing that he could catch up in his defence

For a space he thought of a headlong bolt for the security of the public ways directly the spell was over Apart from the trivial consideration of his self respect, he perceived that this would be only a foolish postponement and aggravation of his trouble He perceived the ferret faced man and the albino talking together with their eyes towards him Presently they were talking to the swart man, who stood with his broad back studiously towards Denton

At last came the end of the second spell The lender of oil cans stopped his press sharply and turned round, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand His eyes had the quiet expectation of one who seats himself in a theatre

Now was the crisis and all the little nerves of D[illegible]'s be[illegible] seemed le[illegible] and d[illegible] He h[illegible]d

[illegible]

and entered the passage of the ash pits, only to discover he had left his jacket—which he had taken off because of the heat of the vault—beside his press He walked back He met the albino eye to eye

He heard the ferret faced man in expostulation

"'E reely ought, eat it," said the ferret faced man "'E did reely"

"No—you leave 'im alone," said the swart man

Apparently nothing further was to happen to him *that day* He passed out to the passage and staircase that led up to the moving platforms of the city

He emerged on the livid brilliance and streaming movement of the public street He became acutely aware of his disfigured face, and felt his swelling bruises with a limp, investigatory hand He went up to the swiftest platform, and seated himself on a Labour Company bench

He lapsed into a pensive torpor The immediate dangers and stresses of his position he saw with a sort of static clearness What would they do to-morrow! He could not tell What would Elizabeth think of his brutalisation? He could not tell He was exhausted He was aroused presently by a hand upon his arm

He looked up, and saw the swart man seated beside him He started Surely he was safe from violence in the public way!

The swart man's face retained no traces of his share in the fight, his expression was free from hostility—seemed almost deferential "'Scuse me," he said, with a total absence of truculence Denton realised that no assault was intended He stared, awaiting the next development

It was evident the next sentence was premeditated "*Whad—I—was—going*—to say—was this," said the swart man, and sought through a silence for further words

"Whad—I—was—going—to say—was this," he repeated

Finally he abandoned that gambit "*You're aw right*," he cried, laying a grimy hand on Denton's grimy sleeve "*You're aw right* You're a ge'man Sorry—very sorry Wanted to tell you that"

Denton realised that there must exist motives beyond

a mere imp lse to abom nable procee l ngs in the man. He n ed ated and swallowed an n v rtl v pr de

I d d not mean to be offens ve to yo I e sa d in refus ng that b t of bread

Meant t fr en lly sa l the swart man recall ng the scene b t— n front of tl at blarsted Wh ey and l s sn gger—well—I *ad* to scrap

Yes sa d Denton w th sudden fervour I was a fool

" Ah sa d the s vart man with great sat sfact on *Tla s a v r ght* Sl ake

And Denton shook

The n o ing pla form was r sh ng hv the establ sh men of a face n o l ler and ts l wer f on vas a h ge d p av of m r ror des gned to s m la e l e h st for m re s nme r cal fea es D n on ca gl t l e reflec t on of l self an l l s ne v fr end en o lv tw s ed and b oa lened H s o vn face was p ffe l ones led and b od s a ned a gr n of d o c and ns ncere am ab l y d s rted s la de A v p of ha r o cl ded one eve The t ck of he m r presen ed the s vart man as a gross expans on of *l p* and nos r *l* They vere l nked by shak ng hands Then al p ly th s v on pa ed—to re n to me nory n the anæm c n ed at ons of a wak ng dav n

As l e shook the swart man made some m l l ed re ma k to the effect that he had al vavs kno vn he co ld get on th a gentle nan f one came h s wav He prol nged the sl ak ng n l Den on nder he nfl ence of the m ror w l l ew h s hand The s va man be came pens ve spat mpress vely on the platform and res me l l s the ne

Whad I was go ng to say was th s he sa d was gravelled and shook l s head at h s foot

Den on became cur ous Go on he sa d at ent ve

The swart man took the pl nge He grasped Denton s arm became int mate in h s att tude Scuse

me," he said "Fact is you done know 'ow to scrap Done know 'ow to Why—you done know 'ow to *begin* You'll get killed if you don't mind Ouldin' your 'ands— *There!*"

He reinforced his statement by objurgation, watching the effect of each oath with a wary eye

'F r instance You're tall Long arms You got a longer reach than any one in the brasted vault Gobblimey, but I thought I'd got a Tough on 'Stead ot which Scuse me I wouldn t have 'it you if I'd known It s like fighting sacks 'Tisn' right Y r arms seemed 'ung on 'ooks Reg'lar—'ung on 'ooks There!

Denton stared, and then surprised and hurt his battered chin by a sudden laugh Bitter tears came into his eyes

"Go on,' he said

The swart man reverted to his formula He was good enough to say he liked the look of Denton thought he had stood up "amazing plucky On'y pluck ain t no good—ain't no brasted good—if you don't 'old your *'ands*

"Whad I was going to say was this," he said "Lem me show you 'ow to scrap Jest lemme You're ig'nant you ain't no class but you might be a very decent scrapper—very decent Shown That's what I meant to say"

Denton hesitated "But—" he said, "I can't give you anything—"

'That's the ge'man all over,' said the swart man "Who arst you to?"

"But your time?"

If you don't get learnt scrapping you'll get killed,—don't you make no bones of that"

Denton thought "I don't know" he said

He looked at the face bes de him and all its na ive coarseness shouted at him He felt a q uck revulsion from his transient friendliness It seemed to him to

credible that it should be necessary for him to be indebted to such a creature

"The chaps are always scrapping," said the swart man "Always And, of course—if one gets waxy and 'its you vital "

"By God!" cried Denton, "I wish one would"

"Of course, if you feel like that—"

"You don't understand"

"P'raps I don't," said the swart man, and lapsed into a fuming silence

When he spoke again his voice was less friendly, and he prodded Denton by way of address "Look see!" he said "are you going to let me show you 'ow to scrap?"

"It's tremendously kind of you," said Denton, "but—"

There was a pause The swart man rose and bent over Denton

"Too much ge'man" he said—"eh? I got a red face By gosh! you are—you *are* a brasted fool!"

He turned away, and instantly Denton realised the truth of this remark

The swart man descended with dignity to a cross [illegible]

Brute force, the final, the fundamental, had thrust its face through all his explanations and glosses and consolations and grinned enigmatically Though he was hungry and tired, he did not go on directly to the Labour Hotel, where he would meet Elizabeth He found he was beginning to think, he wanted very greatly to think, and so, wrapped in a monstrous cloud of meditation, he went the circuit of the city on his moving platform twice You figure him, tearing through the glaring, thunder-voiced city at a pace of fifty miles an hour, the city upon the planet that spins along its

chartless path through space many thousands of miles an hour, funking most terribly, and trying to understand why the heart and will in him should suffer and keep alive

When at last he came to Elizabeth, she was white and anxious He might have noted she was in trouble, had it not been for his own preoccupation He feared most that she would desire to know every detail of his indignities that she would be sympathetic or indignant He saw her eyebrows rise at the sight of him

"I've had rough handling," he said, and gasped "It's too fresh—too hot I don't want to talk about it" He sat down with an unavoidable air of sullenness

She stared at him in astonishment, and as she read something of the significant hieroglyphic of his battered face, her lips whitened Her hand—it was thinner now than in the days of their prosperity, and her first finger was a little altered by the metal punching she did—clenched convulsively "This horrible world!" she said and said no more

In these latter days they had become a very silent couple they said scarcely a word to each other that night, but each followed a private train of thought In the small hours, as Elizabeth lay awake, Denton started up beside her suddenly—he had been lying as still as a dead man

"I cannot stand it!" cried Denton "I *will* not stand it!"

She saw him dimly, sitting up, saw his arm lunge as if in a furious blow at the enshrouding night Then for a space he was still

"It is too much—it is more than one can bear!"

She could say nothing To her, also, it seemed that this was as far as one could go She waited through a long stillness She could see that Denton sat with his arms about his knees, his chin almost touching them

Then he laughed

"No," he said at last, "I'm going to stand it. That's the peculiar thing. There isn't a grain of suicide in us—not a grain. I suppose all the people with a turn that way have gone. We're going through with it—to the end."

Elizabeth thought gravely, and realised that this also was true.

"We're going through with it. To think of all who have gone through with it: all the generations—endless—endless. Little beasts that snapped and snarled, snapping and snarling, snapping and snarling, generation after generation."

His monotone ended abruptly, resumed after a vast interval.

"There were ninety thousand years of stone age. A Denton somewhere in all those years. Apostolic succession. The grace of going through. Let me see! Ninety—nine hundred—three nines twenty-seven—*three thousand generations of men!*—men more or less. And each fought and was bruised and shamed, and somehow held his own—going through with it—passing it on. ... And thousands more to come perhaps—thousands!

"Passing it on. I wonder if they will thank us."

His voice assumed an argumentative note. "If one could find something definite. ... If one could say, This is why—this is why it goes on. ..."

He became still, and Elizabeth's eyes slowly separated him from the darkness until at last she could see how he sat with his head resting on his hand. A sense of the enormous remoteness of their minds came to her, that dim suggestion of another being seemed to her a figure of their mutual understanding. What could he be thinking now? What might he not say next? Another age seemed to elapse before he sighed and whispered: "No. I don't understand it. No!" Then a long interval, and he repeated this. But the second time it had the tone almost of a solution.

She became aware that he was preparing to lie down. She marked his movements, perceived with astonishment how he adjusted his pillow with a careful regard to comfort He lay down with a sigh of contentment almost His passion had passed He lay still and presently his breathing became regular and deep

But Elizabeth remained with eyes wide open in the darkness, until the clamour of a bell and the sudden brilliance of the electric light warned them that the Labour Company had need of them for yet another day

That day came a scuffle with the albino Whitey and the little ferret faced man Blunt, the swart artist in scrapping having first let Denton grasp the bearing of his lesson intervened, not without a certain quality of patronage "Drop 'is 'air, Whitey, and let the man be said his gross voice through a shower of indignities "Can t you see 'e don't know '*ow* to scrap?" And Denton, lying shamefully in the dust, realised that he must accept that course of instruction after all

He made his apology straight and clean He scrambled up and walked to Blunt ' I was a fool and you are right," he said "If it isn't too late

That night after the second spell, Denton went with Blunt to certain waste and slime soaked vaults under the Port of London to learn the first beginnings of the high art of scrapping as it had been perfected in the great world of the underways how to hit or kick a man so as to hurt him excruciatingly or make him violently sick how to hit or kick "vital," how to use glass in one s garments as a club and to spread red ruin with various domestic implements, how to anticipate and demolish your adversary's intentions in other directions all the pleasant devices, in fact that had grown up among the disinherited of the great cities of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, were spread out by a gifted exponent for Denton's learning Blunt s bashfulness

fell from him as the instruction proceeded, and he developed a certain expert dignity, a quality of fatherly consideration He treated Denton with the utmost consideration, only "flicking him up a bit" now and then, to keep the interest hot, and roaring with laughter at a happy fluke of Denton's that covered his mouth with blood

'I'm always keerless of my mouth" said Blunt, admitting a weakness "Always It don't seem to matter, like, just getting bashed in the mouth—not if your chin's all right Tastin' blood does me good Always But I better not 'it you again"

Denton went home, to fall asleep exhausted and wake in the small hours with aching limbs and all his bruises tingling Was it worth while that he should go on living? He listened to Elizabeth's breathing, and remembering that he must have awaked her the previous night he lay very still He was sick with infinite disgust at the new conditions of his life He hated it all, hated even the genial savage who had protected him so generously The monstrous fraud of civilisation glared stark before his eyes he saw it as a vast lunatic growth, producing a deepening torrent of savagery below, and above ever more flimsy gentility and silly wastefulness He could see no redeeming reason, no touch of honour, either in the life he had led or in this life to which he had fallen Civilisation presented itself as some catastrophic product as little concerned with men—save as victims—as a cyclone or a planetary collision He, and therefore all mankind, seemed living utterly in vain His mind sought some strange expedients of escape, if not for himself then at least for Elizabeth But he meant them for himself What if he hunted up Mwres and told him of their disaster? It came to him as an astonishing thing how utterly Mwres and Bindon had passed out of his range Where were they? What were they doing? From that he passed to thoughts of utter dishonour And finally not arising in any way

out of this mental tumult, but ending it as dawn ends the night, came the clear and obvious conclusion of the night before—the conviction that he had to go through with things, that, apart from any remoter view and quite sufficient for all his thought and energy, he had to stand up and fight among his fellows and quit himself like a man.

The second night's instruction was perhaps less dreadful than the first, and the third was even endurable, for Blunt dealt out some praise. The fourth day Denton chanced upon the fact that the ferret faced man was a coward. There passed a fortnight of smouldering days and feverish instruction at night, Blunt, with many blasphemies, testified that never had he met so apt a pupil, and all night long Denton dreamt of kicks and counters and gouges and cunning tricks. For all that time no further outrages were attempted, for fear of Blunt, and then came the second crisis. Blunt did not come one day—afterwards he admitted his deliberate intention—and through the tedious morning Whitey awaited the interval between the spells with an ostentatious impatience. He knew nothing of the scrapping lessons, and he spent the time in *telling* Denton and the vault generally of certain disagreeable proceedings he had in mind.

Whitey was not popular, and the vault disengaged to see him haze the new man with only a languid interest. But matters changed when Whitey's attempt to open the proceedings by kicking Denton in the face was met by an excellently executed duck, catch and throw, that completed the flight of Whitey's foot in its orbit and brought Whitey's head into the ash heap that had once received Denton's. Whitey arose a shade whiter, and now blasphemously bent upon vital injuries. There were indecisive passages, foiled enterprises that deepened Whitey's evidently growing perplexity, and then things developed into a grouping of Denton uppermost with Whitey's throat in his hand, his knee on Whitey's chest,

and a tearful Whitey with a black face, protruding tongue and broken fingers endeavouring to explain the misunderstanding by means of hoarse sounds. Moreover, it was evident that among the bystanders there had never been a more popular person than Denton.

Denton, with proper precaution, released his antagonist and stood up. All his blood seemed changed to some sort of fluid fire. His limbs felt light, and supernaturally strong. The thought that he was a martyr in the civilisation machine had vanished from his mind. He was a man in a world of men.

The little fierce-faced man was the first in the company to pat him on the back. The lender of oil cans was a [illegible] of genial congratulation. [illegible] It seemed incredible to Denton that he had ever thought of despair.

Denton was convinced that not only had he to go through with this thing, but that he could. He sat on the canvas pallet explaining this new aspect to Elizabeth. One side of his face was bruised. She had not recently fought, she had not been patted on the back. There were no [illegible] bruises upon her face, only a pallor and a new line or so about the mouth. She was taking the woman's share. She looked steadfastly at Denton in his new mood of prophecy. "I feel that there is something," he was saying, "something that goes on, a Being of Life in which we live and move and have our being, something that began fifty—a hundred million years ago perhaps, that goes on—on, growing, spreading, to things beyond us—things that will justify us all. That will explain and justify my fighting—these bruises and all the pain of it. It's the chisel—yes, the chisel of the Maker. If only I could make you feel as I feel it! If I could make you. You will, dear. I know you will."

"No," she said in a low voice. "No, I shall not."

"So I might have thought—

She shook her head "No," she said 'I have thought as well What you say—doesn't convince me"

She looked at his face resolutely "I hate it" she said, and caught at her breath "You do not understand, you do not think There was a time when you said things and I believed them I am growing wiser You are a man, you can fight, force your way You do not mind bruises You can be coarse and ugly, and still a man Yes—it makes you It makes you You are right Only a woman is not like that We are different We have let ourselves get civilised too soon This underworld is not for us"

She paused and began again

I hate it! I hate this horrible canvas! I hate it more than—more than the worst that can happen It hurts my fingers to touch it It is horrible to the skin And the women I work with day after day! I lie awake at nights and think how I may be growing like *them*

She stopped "I *am* growing like them" she cried passionately

Denton stared at her distress "But—" he said and stopped

"You don't understand What have I? What have I to save me? *You* can fight Fighting is man's work But women—women are different I have thought it all out, I have done nothing but think night and day Look at the colour of my face! I cannot go on I cannot endure this life I cannot endure it"

She stopped She hesitated

"You do not know all," she said abruptly, and *for* an instant her lips had a bitter smile "*I have been* asked to leave you'

Leave me!"

She made no answer save an affirmative movement of the head

Denton stood up sharply They stared at one another through a long silence

Suddenly she turned herself about, and flung face downward upon their canvas bed She did not sob, she made no sound She lay still upon her face After a vast, distressful void her shoulders heaved and she began to weep silently

"Elizabeth!" he whispered—"Elizabeth!"

Very softly he sat down beside her, bent down, put his arm across her in a doubtful caress, seeking vainly for some clue to this intolerable situation

"Elizabeth" he whispered in her ear

She thrust him from her with her hand "I cannot bear a child to be a slave!" and broke out into loud and bitter weeping

Denton's face changed—became blank dismay Presently he slipped from the bed and stood on his feet All the complacency had vanished from his face, had given place to impotent rage He began to rave and curse at the intolerable forces which pressed

the insensate vastness of the overwhelming city

V—*Bindon Intervenes*

In Bindon's younger days he had dabbled in speculation and made three brilliant flukes For the rest of his life he had the wisdom to let gambling alone, and the conceit to believe himself a very clever man A certain desire for influence and reputation interested

from all parts of the world. This much for his public activities. In his private life he was a man of pleasure. And this is the story of his heart.

But before proceeding to such depths one must devote a little time to the exterior of this person. Its physical basis was slender, and short, and dark, and the face, which was fine featured and assisted by pigments, varied from an insecure self complacency to an intelligent uneasiness. His face and head had been depilated, according to the cleanly and hygienic fashion of the time, so that the colour and contour of his hair varied with his costume. This he was constantly changing.

At times he would distend himself with pneumatic vestments in the rococo vein. From among the billowy developments of this style, and beneath a translucent and illuminated head dress, his eye watched jealously for the respect of the less fashionable world. At other times he emphasised his elegant slenderness in close fitting garments of black satin. For effects of dignity he would assume broad pneumatic shoulders from which hung a robe of carefully arranged folds of China silk, and a classical Bindon in pink tights was also a transient phenomenon in the eternal pageant of Destiny. In the days when he hoped to marry Elizabeth, he sought to impress and charm her, and at the same time to take off something of his burthen of forty years, by wearing the last fancy of the contemporary buck, a costume of elastic material with distensible warts and horns, changing in colour as he w[illegible] ...ement of versatile chromat[illegible] affection had not [illegible] Denton, and if he [illegible] old fashioned ways, this extremely *chic* conception would have ravished her. Bindon had consulted Elizabeth's father before presenting himself in this garb—he was one of those men who always invite criticism of their costume—and Mwres had pronounced him *all*

that the heart of woman could desire But the affair of the hypnotist proved that his knowledge of the heart of woman was incomplete

Bindon's idea of marrying had been formed some little time before Mwres threw Elizabeth's budding womanhood in his way It was one of Bindon's most cherished secrets that he had a considerable capacity for a pure and simple life of a grossly sentimental type The thought imparted a sort of pathetic seriousness to the offensive and quite inconsequent and unmeaning excesses which he was pleased to regard as dashing wickedness, and which a number of good people also were so unwise as to treat in that desirable manner As a consequence of these excesses, and perhaps by reason also of an inherited tendency to early decay, his liver became seriously affected, and he suffered increasing inconvenience when travelling by aeroplane It was during his convalescence from a protracted bilious attack that it occurred to him that in spite of all the terrible fascinations of Vice, if he found a beautiful, gentle, good young woman of a not too violently intellectual type to devote her life to him, he might yet be saved to Goodness, and even rear a spirited family in his likeness to solace his declining years But like so many experienced men of the world, he doubted if there were any good women Of such as he had heard tell he was outwardly sceptical and privately much afraid

When the aspiring Mwres effected his introduction to Elizabeth, it seemed to him that his good fortune was complete He fell in love with her at once Of course, he had always been falling in love since he was sixteen, in accordance with the extremely varied recipes to be found in the accumulated literature of many centuries *But this was different* This was real love It seemed to him to call forth all the lurking goodness in his nature He felt that for her sake he could give up a way of life that had already produced the gravest

lesions on his liver and nervous system His imagination presented him with idyllic pictures of the life of the reformed rake He would never be sentimental with her, or silly, but always a little cynical and bitter as became the past Yet he was sure she would have an intuition of his real greatness and goodness And in due cou[illegible] pour his version of [illegible] what a con[illegible] Shelley an[illegible] her shocked, very beautiful, and no doubt sympathetic ear And preparatory to these things he wooed her with infinite subtlety and respect And the reserve with which Elizabeth treated him seemed nothing more nor less than an exquisite modesty touched and enhanced by an equally exquisite lack of ideas

Bindon knew nothing of her wandering affections nor of the attempt made by Mwres to utilise hypnotism as a corrective to this digression of her heart, he conceived he was on the best of terms with Elizabeth, and had made her quite successfully various significant presents of jewellery and the more virtuous cosmetics when her elopement with Denton threw the world out of gear for him His first aspect of the matter was rage begotten of wounded vanity, and as Mwres was the most convenient person, he vented the first brunt of it upon him

He went immediately and insulted the desolate father grossly, and then spent an active and determined day going to and fro about the city and interviewing people in a consistent and partly successful attempt to ruin that matrimonial speculator The effectual nature of these activities gave him a temporary exhilaration and he went to the dining place he had frequented in his wicked days in a devil may care frame of mind, and dined altogether too amply and cheerfully with two other golden youths in the early forties He threw up the game, no woman was worth being good for and

he astonished even himself by the strain of witty cynicism he developed One of the other desperate blades, warmed with wine, made a facetious allusion to his disappointment but at the time this did not seem unpleasant

The next morning found his liver and temper inflamed He kicked his phonographic news machine to pieces, dismissed his valet, and resolved that he would perpetrate a terrible revenge upon Elizabeth Or Denton Or somebody But anyhow, it was to be a terrible revenge, and the friend who had made fun at him should no longer see him in the light of a foolish girl's victim He knew something of the little property that was due to her and that this would be the only support of the young couple until Mwres should relent If Mwres did not relent and if unpropitious things should happen to the affair in which Elizabeth's expectations lay, they would come upon evil times and be *sufficiently amenable to temptation of a sinister sort* Bindon's imagination abandoning its beautiful idealism

. . . .

passion

His imagination stood aside like a respectful footman who has done his work in ushering in the emotion

'My God!' cried Bindon 'I will have her! If I have to kill myself to get her! And that other fellow—!'

After an interview with his medical man and a penance for his overnight excesses in the form of bitter drugs a mitigated but absolutely resolute Bindon sought out Mwres Mwres he found properly smashed, and impoverished and humble in a mood of frantic self preservation, ready to sell himself body and soul, much

more any interest in a disobedient daughter, to recover his lost position in the world In the reasonable discussion that followed, it was agreed that these misguided young people should be left to sink into distress, or possibly even assisted towards that improving discipline by Bindon's financial influence

"And then?" said Mwres

"They will come to the Labour Company," said Bindon "They will wear the blue canvas"

"And then?"

"She will divorce him," he said, and sat for a moment intent upon that prospect For in those days the austere limitations of divorce of Victorian times were extraordinarily relaxed, and a couple might separate on a hundred different scores

Then suddenly Bindon astonished himself and Mwres by jumping to his feet "She *shall* divorce him!" he cried "I will have it so—I will work it so By God! it shall be so He shall be disgraced, so that she must He shall be smashed and pulverised"

The idea of smashing and pulverising inflamed him further He began a Jovian pacing up and down the little office "I will have her," he cried "I *will* have her! Heaven and Hell shall not save her from me!" His passion evaporated in its expression and left him at the end simply histrionic He struck an attitude and ignored with heroic determination a sharp twinge of pain about the diaphragm And Mwres sat with his pneumatic cap deflated and himself very visibly impressed

And so, with a fair persistence, Bindon set himself to the work of being Elizabeth's malignant providence using with ingenious dexterity every particle of advantage wealth in those days gave a man over his fellow-creatures. A resort to the consolations of religion hindered these operations not at all He would go and talk with an interesting, experienced and sympathetic Father of the Huysmanite sect of the Isis cult, about all the irrational

I ttle proceed ngs he v as please l to regard as h s Heaven d smav no w cke lness an l the interes ng exper enced and sy p hetic Father represent ng Heaven d smaved wo ld w h a pleas ng affectat on of h rror s ggest s mple and easy penances an l recommen l a monast c foun la n that was a rv coo l h g en c and not vulg ed f r viscerally d sorde e l pen ent s nners of the refined and wealthy type An l af er these exc r sions B nd n wo ld come back to Lon lon q te act ve and pas onate aga n He wo ld mach na e h really con lerable energy an l repa r to a certa n gallery h gh above he s reet of moving vays from wl ch he co ld v e v tl e en ance to he barrack f the Labo r Co npany in the vard vh ch sheltere l D n on and El abe h And at last one day he aw El zabeth go n and tl ereby h s pas n was renewed

So n he f l ness of t me the compl cated dev ces of B n l n pene l an l he co ld go to M vres and tell him a he y ng pe p e vere near d pa r

I s n e for ou he sa l to le yo r parental aff ns have plav She s been n bl e canvas some mon l s and the ve been co pe l toge her in one of th se l abo r dens an l the l tle g rl s dea l She kn ws n v what l s manh o l s wor h to her by way of pro e n p or g l Sl e ll see th ngs now in a clea e ght Y go to her—I d n t vant to appear in th s aff et—an l po nt o t to her how necessary it is that he sh ld get a d vo ce fr m h m

Sl e s obs na e sa d Mwres do b f lly

Sp s l B ndon She s a wonderful g rl—a won le l g l!

Sl e ll ref e

Of co rse sl e w ll B t leave t open to her I eave t open to her And some av— n at st *fly* den n that irksome to l ome l fe they can t help it—*they ll have a q a rel* And then—

Mwres med tated over the matter and d d as he was told

Then Bindon, as he had arranged with his spiritual adviser, went into retreat The retreat of the Huysmanite sect was a beautiful place, with the sweetest air in London, lit by natural sunlight, and with restful quadrangles of real grass open to the sky, where at the same time the penitent man of pleasure might enjoy all the pleasures of loafing and all the satisfaction of distinguished austerity And, save for participation in the simple and wholesome dietary of the place and in ertain magnificent chants, Bindon spent all his time in meditation upon the theme of Elizabeth, and the extreme purification his soul had undergone since he first saw her, and whether he would be able to get a dispensation to marry her from the experienced and sympathetic Father in spite of the approaching "sin" of her divorce, and then Bindon would lean against a pillar of the quadrangle and lapse into reveries on the superiority of virtuous love to any other form of indulgence A curious feeling in his back and chest that was trying to attract his attention, a disposition to be hot or shiver, a general sense of ill health and cutaneous discomfort he did his best to ignore *All* that of course belonged to the old life that he was shaking off

When he came out of retreat he went at once to Mwres to ask for news of Elizabeth Mwres was clearly under the impression that he was an exemplary father profoundly touched about the heart by his child's un happiness "She was pale," he said, greatly moved, She was pale When I asked her to come away and leave him—and be happy—she put her head down upon the table"—Mwres sniffed—"and cried"

His agitation was so great that he could say no more.

'Ah!" said Bindon, respecting this manly grief ..

"Oh!" said Bindon quite suddenly, with his hand to his side

Mwres looked up sharply out of the pit of his sorrows.

startled "What's the matter?" he asked, visibly concerned

"A most violent pain Excuse me! You were telling me about Elizabeth"

And Mwres, after a decent solicitude for Bindon's pain, proceeded with his report It was even unexpectedly hopeful Elizabeth, in her first emotion at discovering that her father had not absolutely deserted her, had been frank with him about her sorrows and disgusts

"Yes," said Bindon, magnificently, "I shall have her yet" And then that novel pain twitched him for the second time

For these lower pains the priest was comparatively ineffectual, inclining rather to regard the body and them as mental illusions amenable to contemplation, so Bindon took it to a man of a class he loathed, a medical man of extraordinary repute and incivility "We must go all over you," said the medical man, and did so with the most disgusting frankness "Did you ever bring any children into the world?" asked this gross materialist among other impertinent questions

"Not that I know of," said Bindon, too amazed to stand upon his dignity

"Ah!" said the medical man, and proceeded with his punching and sounding Medical science in those days was just reaching the beginnings of precision "You'd better go right away," said the medical man, "and make the Euthanasia The sooner the better"

Bindon gasped He had been trying not to understand the technical explanations and anticipations in which the medical man had indulged

"I say!" he said "But do you mean to say . . . Your science "

"Nothing," said the medical man "A few opiates The thing is your own doing, you know, to a certain extent"

"I was sorely tempted in my youth"

It s not that so m ch But you come of a bad sto k Lven if you d have taken preca ons yo d have had bad t mes to w nd ι p v h The m s ake was gett ng bo n The n l scret ns of the parents And yo ve sh ked exerc se and so forth

I had no one to adv se me

Med cal men are al vays ll ng

I was a sp r ted yo ng fello v

We v n t arg e tl e m sel ef s done now Yo ve l ed We can t start y ag a n Yo o gh never to have started at all Frankly—l e E hanas a

B nd n l ated h n n s l nce f r a space E ery wo d of h s b al expert arred pon h s refinemen s He was so gros so per neable to all the s b le s es of be ng P t ιt s no g d p ck ng a q a rel h s doc r M rel ous bel efs he sa d I dont appr e of s c le

Y ve been do ng ıt all your l fe

Well anylow I ve co e to take a ser ous v ew of l fe now

Y re bo nd to f vo go on l v ng Yo ll h rt B for pract cal p rposes s late However f you mean to do that—perl aps I d better m x yo a l le s e l ng You ll l urt a great deal These l e tw nges

I v n es!

Mere prel m nary not ces

H w long can I go on? I mean before I hurt—reall

Yo ll get t hot soon Perhaps three da s"

B n l n t ed to arg e for an ex en n of t me a d ın the m lst of l s plea l ng gasped p t h s hand to h s s le S ll nly tl e ex ra d na v p hos of h s l fe came to l n clear and v v d It s ha l" he sa d It s ınfernally har l! I ve l een no man s enemy b t my own I ve always trea ed e er body q e fa l "

The me l cal man stared at l m w ho t anv s m a l for some seconds He was reflect ng how excel ent it

was that there were no more B n lons to carry on hat l ne of pathos He felt q te op t c I1 n he turned to h s telephone and ordered up a prescr pt on from the Cen ral Pl armacy

He was n er pted by a vo ce beh nd h m By *Go l c e l ndon I ll have her ve*

The ph s an stare l over h s sho l ler at B ndon s expr s on and hen al e el the prescr pt on

So so n as l s pa of l n e rew vas o er B ndon gave vav to rage He set led that the ne l al man was no on an ns pa he c br e an l van ng in *the firs beg nn n s of a g ntleman b t also h l lv n* compe ent and he went off o fo r o l er p ac oners n s e on w h a ew to he es abl l n en of h s n on l o s a d a nst s pr ses he kept that l le p es on n h s pocket W h each he be an by exp n h g a e do h s of he firs docto s n el g n e hon y an l p fe nal kno le lge an l tl en s a el l s mp oms s pp es ng only a fe v mo e ma l fac s n ea h case Tl e e ve e al vavs s h e q en l el c ed b l e d c or In sp e of l e welc me dep c a on of ano he p a oner none of l ese e nen pe l s w ll g e B n lon any hope of el l ng he ang h an l he p es nes hat l some l no v cl e p n h n To the la f hem he n hened h m d o an acc m la ed l g v h me l cal s en e

A e cen es an l cen es he excla me l ho lv "and y can do n h ng—except a l t vo r helpless ne I sav a e me —and hat lo vo do

No l h s ha l on n sa d tl e doctor But yo h *ll have taken preca t ons*

H w was I to kno v?

I wasn t o r place to r n after vo sa d the *med al man* p k a l real of *co n f om h s* p ple slee e W hy sho l l we save *to n p lar?* Yo see—f om one p nt of v ew—people w h mag na t ons and pass ons l ke yours have to go—t ey have to go

faithful simple creature in all the world to howl in sympathy Not one faithful simple soul was there—no shepherd to pipe to him! Had all such faithful simple creatures vanished from this harsh and urgent earth? He wondered whether the horrid vulgar crowd that perpetually went about the city could possibly know what he thought of them If they did he felt sure *some* would try to earn a better opinion Surely the world went from bad to worse It was becoming impossible for Bindons Perhaps some day He was quite sure that the one thing he had needed in life was sympathy For a time he regretted that he left no sonnets—no enigmatical pictures or something of that sort behind him to carry on his being until at last the sympathetic mind should come .

It seemed incredible to him that this that came was extinction Yet his sympathetic spiritual guide was in this matter annoyingly figurative and vague *Consscience!* It had undermined all faith—all hope *To go out* to vanish from theatre and street, from office and dining place, from the dear eyes of womankind And not to be missed! On the whole to leave the world happier!

He reflected that he had never worn his heart upon his sleeve Had he after all been *too* unsympathetic? Few people could suspect how subtly profound he really was beneath the mask of that cynical gaiety of his *They* would not understand the loss they had suffered *Elizabeth*, for example, had not suspected . .

He had reserved that His thoughts having come to *Elizabeth* gravitated about her for some time *How little* Elizabeth understood him!

That thought became intolerable Before all other things he must set that right He realised that *there* was still something for him to do in life, his struggle against Elizabeth was even yet not over He could never overcome her now, as he had hoped and prayed. But he might still impress her!

From that idea he expanded. He might impress her profoundly—he might impress her so that she should for evermore regret her treatment of him. The thing that she must realise before everything else was his magnanimity. His magnanimity! Yes! he had loved her with amazing greatness of heart. He had not seen it so clearly before—but of course he was going to leave her all his property. He saw it instantly as a thing determined and inevitable. She would think how good he was, how spaciously generous, surrounded by all that makes life tolerable from his hand; she would recall with infinite regret her scorn and coldness. And when she sought expression for that regret, she would find that occasion gone forever; she should be met by a locked door, by a disdainful stillness, by a white dead face. He closed his eyes and remained for a space imagining himself that white dead face.

From that he passed to other aspects of the matter, but his determination was assured. He meditated elaborately before he took action, for the drug he had taken inclined him to a lethargic and dignified melancholy. In certain respects he modified details. If he left all his property to Elizabeth it would include the voluptuously appointed room he occupied, and for many reasons he did not care to leave that to her. On the other hand, it had to be left to some one. In his clogged condition this vexed him extremely.

In the end he decided to leave it to the sympathetic exponent of the fashionable religious cult whose consolation had been so pleasing in the past. *He* will understand, said Bindon, with a sentimental sob. He knows what Evil means—he understands something of the Splendours, the Fascination of the Sphinx of Sin. Yes—he will understand. By that phrase it was that Bindon was pleased to dignify certain unhealthy and undignified departures from sane conduct to which a misguided vanity and an ill-controlled curiosity had led him. He sat for a space thinking how very Hellenic

and Italian and Neronic, and all those things, he had been Even now—might one not try a sonnet? A penetrating voice to echo down the ages, sensuous sinister, and sad For a space he forgot Elizabeth In the course of half an hour he spoilt three phonographic *coils*, got a headache, took a second dose to calm him [illegible]

distrust, if he attempted any specific exclusion of that young man, she might—*misunderstand* Yes—she should have her Denton still His magnanimity must go even to that He tried to think only of Elizabeth in the matter

He rose with a sigh, and limped across to the telephonic apparatus that communicated with his solicitor In ten minutes a will duly attested and with its proper thumb mark signature lay in the solicitor's office three miles away And then for a space Bindon sat very still

Suddenly he started out of a vague reverie and pressed an investigatory hand to his side

Then he jumped eagerly to his feet and rushed to the telephone The Euthanasia Company had rarely been called by a client in a greater hurry

So it came at last that Denton and his Elizabeth, against all hope, returned unseparated from the labour servitude to which they had fallen Elizabeth came out from her cramped subterranean den of metal beaters and all the sordid circumstances of blue canvas as one comes out of a nightmare Back towards the sunlight their fortune took them, once the bequest was known to them, the bare thought of another day's hammering became intolerable They went up long lifts and ways

to levels that they had not seen since the days of their disaster At first she was full of this sensation of escape, even to think of the underways was intolerable, only after many months could she begin to recall with *sympathy the faded women who were still below there*, murmuring scandals and reminiscences and folly, and tapping away their lives

Her choice of the apartments they presently took expressed the vehemence of her release They were ooms upon the very verge of the city they had a roof space and a balcony upon the city wall wide open to the sun and wind, the country and the sky

And in that balcony comes the last scene in this story It was a summer sunsetting, and the hills of Surrey were very blue and clear Denton leant upon the balcony regarding them, and Elizabeth sat by his side Very wide and spacious was the view, for their balcony hung five hundred feet above the ancient level of the ground The oblongs of the Food Company, broken

the squatting place of the children of Uya On those *further slopes gaunt machines of unknown import worked* slackly at the end of their spell, and the hill crest was set with stagnant wind vanes Along the great south road the Labour Company's field workers in huge wheeled mechanical vehicles were hurrying back to their meals their last spell finished And through the air a dozen little private aëropiles sailed down towards the city Familiar scene as it was to the eyes of Denton and Elizabeth it would have filled the minds of their ancestors with incredulous amazement Denton's thoughts fluttered towards the future in a vain attempt at what that scene might be in another two hundred years, and, recoiling turned towards the past

He shared something of the growing knowledge of

the time, he could picture the quaint smoke grimed Victorian city with its narrow little roads of beaten earth its wide common land, ill organised, ill built suburbs, and irregular enclosures the old countryside of the Stuart times, with its little villages and its petty London, the England of the monasteries the far older England of the Roman dominion and then before that a wild country with here and there the huts of some warring tribe These huts must have come and gone and come again through a space of years that made the Roman camp and villa seem but yesterday and before those years before even the huts, there had been men in the valley Even then—so recent had it all been when one judged it by the standards of geological time—this valley had been here, and those hills yonder, higher, perhaps, and snow tipped, had still been yonder hills and the Thames had flowed down from the Cotswolds to the sea But the men had been but the shapes of men, creatures of darkness and ignorance, victims of beasts and floods storms and pestilence and incessant hunger They had held a precarious foothold amidst bears and lions and all the monstrous violence of the past Already some at least of these enemies were over come

For a time Denton pursued the thoughts of this spacious vision, trying in obedience to his instinct to find his place and proportion in the scheme

"It has been chance," he said "it has been luck. We have come through It happens we have come through Not by any strength of our own

"And yet No I don't know"

He was silent for a long time before he spoke again

"After all—there is a long time yet There have scarcely been men for twenty thousand years—and there has been life for twenty millions. And what are generations? What are generations? It is enormous and we are so little Yet we know—we feel We are not dumb atoms, we are part of it—part of it—to the limit

of our strength and will Even to die is part of it Whether we die or live we are in the making

As time goes on—*perhaps*—men will be wiser . . . Wiser

"*Will they ever understand?*"

He became silent again Elizabeth said nothing to these things but she regarded his dreaming face with infinite affection Her mind was not very active that evening A great contentment possessed her After a time she laid a gentle hand on his beside her He fondled it softly, still looking out upon the spacious gold woven view So they sat as the sun went down Until presently Elizabeth shivered

Denton recalled himself abruptly from these spacious issues of his leisure and went in to fetch her a shawl



STORY THE FIFTH

The Man who could work Miracles

A Pantoum in Prose

IT is doubtful whether the gift was innate For my own part I think it came to him suddenly Indeed, until he was thirty he was a sceptic, and did not believe in miraculous powers And here, since it is the most convenient place, I must mention that he was a little man, and had eyes of a hot brown, very erect red hair, a moustache with ends that he twisted up, and freckles His name was George McWhirter Fotheringay—not the sort of name by any means to lead to any expectation of miracles—and he was clerk at Gomshott's He was greatly addicted to assertive argument It was while he was asserting the impossibility of miracles that he had his first intimation of his extraordinary powers This particular argument was being held in the bar of the Long Dragon, and Toddy Beamish was conducting the opposition by a monotonous but effective "So *you* say," that drove Mr Fotheringay to the very limit of his patience

There were present, besides these two, a very dusty cyclist landlord Cox, and Miss Maybridge, the perfectly respectable and rather portly barmaid of the Dragon

Miss Maybridge was standing with her back to Mr Fotheringay, washing glasses, the others were watching him, more or less amused by the present ineffectiveness of the assertive method Goaded by the Torres Vedras tactics of Mr Beamish, Mr Fotheringay determined to make an unusual rhetorical effort "Looky here, Mr Beamish," said Mr Fotheringay 'Let us clearly understand what a miracle is It's something contrariwise to the course of nature done by power of Will, something ."

had hitherto been a silent auditor, and received his assent—given with a hesitating cough and a glance at Mr Beamish The landlord would express no opinion, and Mr Fotheringay, returning to Mr Beamish, received the unexpected concession of a qualified assent to his definition of a miracle

For instance," said Mr Fotheringay, greatly encouraged "Here would be a miracle That lamp, in the natural course of nature, couldn't burn like that upsy-down, could it, Beamish?"

You say it couldn't," said Beamish

'And you?" said Fotheringay "You don't mean to say—eh?

No," said Beamish reluctantly "No it couldn't'

"Very well," said Mr Fotheringay "Then here comes someone, as it might be me, along here, and stands as it might be here, and says to that lamp, as I might do collecting all my will—'Turn upsy down without breaking, and go on burning steady,' and— Hullo'

It was enough to make anyone say "Hullo!" The impossible, the incredible, was visible to them all The lamp hung inverted in the air, burning quietly with its flame pointing down It was as solid, as indisputable as ever a lamp was, the prosaic common lamp of the Long Dragon bar

Mr Fotheringay stood with an extended forefinger

and the knitted brows of one anticipating a catastrophic smash. The cyclist, who was sitting next the lamp, ducked and jumped across the bar. Everybody jumped, more or less. Miss Maybridge turned and screamed. For nearly three seconds the lamp remained still. A faint cry of mental distress came from Mr Fotheringay. "I can't keep it up," he said, "any longer." He staggered back, and the inverted lamp suddenly flared, fell against the corner of the bar, bounced aside, smashed upon the floor, and went out.

It was lucky it had a metal receiver, or the whole place would have been in a blaze. Mr Cox was the first to speak, and his remark, shorn of needless excrescences, was to the effect that Fotheringay was a fool. Fotheringay was beyond disputing even so fundamental a proposition as that! He was astonished beyond measure at the thing that had occurred. The subsequent conversation threw absolutely no light on the matter so far as Fotheringay was concerned; the general opinion not only followed Mr Cox very closely but very vehemently. Everyone accused Fotheringay of a silly trick, and presented him to himself as a foolish destroyer of comfort and security. His mind was in a tornado of perplexity, he was himself inclined to agree with them, and he made a remarkably ineffectual opposition to the proposal of his departure.

He went home flushed and heated, coat-collar crumpled, eyes smarting and ears red. He watched each of the ten street lamps nervously as he passed it. It was only when he found himself alone in his little bedroom in Church Row that he was able to grapple seriously with his memories of the occurrence, and ask, "What on earth happened?"

He had removed his coat and boots, and was sitting on the bed with his hands in his pockets repeating the text of his defence for the seventeenth time, "*I didn't* want the confounded thing to upset," when it occurred to him that at the precise moment he had said the

commanding words he had inadvertently willed the thing he said and that when he had seen the lamp in the air he had felt that it depended on him to maintain it there without being clear how this was to be done He had not a particularly complex mind, or he might have stuck for a time at that "inadvertently willed," embracing, as it does, the abstrusest problems of voluntary action but as it was, the idea came to him with a quite acceptable haziness And from that following, as I must admit, no clear logical path, he came to the test of experiment

He pointed resolutely to his candle and collected his mind, though he felt he did a foolish thing "Be raised up," he said But in a second that feeling vanished The candle was raised, hung in the air one giddy moment, and as Mr Fotheringay gasped, fell with a smash on his toilet table, leaving him in darkness save for the expiring glow of its wick

For a time Mr Fotheringay sat in the darkness, perfectly still "It did happen, after all," he said "And 'ow I'm to explain it I don't know" He sighed heavily, and began feeling in his pockets for a match He could find none, and he rose and groped about the toilet table "I wish I had a match," he said He resorted to his coat, and there were none there, and then it dawned upon him that miracles were possible even with matches He extended a hand and scowled at it in the dark "Let there be a match in that hand," he said He felt some light object fall across his palm, and his fingers closed upon a match

After several ineffectual attempts to light this, he discovered it was a safety match He threw it down, and then it occurred to him that he might have willed it lit He did, and perceived it burning in the midst of his toilet table mat He caught it up hastily and it went out His perception of possibilities enlarged, and he felt for and replaced the candle in its candlestick. "Here! *you* be lit," said Mr Fotheringay, and forth

with the candle was flaring, and he saw a little black hole in the toilet cover, with a wisp of smoke rising from it For a time he stared from this to the little flame and back, and then looked up and met his own gaze in the looking glass By this help he communed with himself in silence for a time

"How about miracles now?" said Mr Fotheringay at last, addressing his reflection

The subsequent meditations of Mr Fotheringay were of a severe but confused description So far as he could see, it was a case of pure willing with him The nature of his first experiences disinclined him for any further experiments except of the most cautious type But he lifted a sheet of paper, and turned a glass of water pink and then green, and he created a snail, which he miraculously annihilated, and got himself a miraculous new tooth brush Somewhen in the small hours he had reached the fact that his will power must be of a particu larly rare and pungent quality, a fact of which he had certainly had inklings before, but no certain assurance The scare and perplexity of his first discovery was now qualified by pride in this evidence of singularity and by vague intimations of advantage He became aware that the church clock was striking one, and as it did not occur to him that his daily duties at Gomshott's might be miraculously dispensed with, he resumed undress ng, in order to get to bed without further delay As he struggled to get his shirt over his head, he was struck with a brilliant idea "Let me be in bed," he said [illegible] and fou [illegible]
finding [illegible]
shirt—n [illegible]
said wit [illegible]
comfortably asleep [illegible] "

He awoke at his usual hour and was pensive all through breakfast time, wondering whether his over-night experience might not be a particularly vivid dream At length his mind turned again to cautious

experiments For instance, he had three eggs for breakfast, two his landlady had supplied, good, but shoppy, and one was a delicious fresh goose-egg, laid, cooked, and served by his extraordinary will He hurried off to Gomshott's in a state of profound but carefully concealed excitement, and only remembered the shell of the third egg when his landlady spoke of it that night All day he could do no work because of this astonishingly new self knowledge, but this caused him no inconvenience, because he made up for it miraculously in his last ten minutes

As the day wore on his state of mind passed from wonder to elation, albeit the circumstances of his dismissal from the Long Dragon were still disagreeable to recall, and a garbled account of the matter that had *reached his colleagues led to some badinage It was* evident he must be careful how he lifted frangible articles, but in other ways his gift promised more and more as he turned it over in his mind He intended among other things to increase his personal property by unostentatious acts of creation He called into existence *a pair of very splendid diamond studs and hastily* annihilated them again as young Gomshott came across the counting house to his desk He was afraid young Gomshott might wonder how he had come by them He saw quite clearly the gift required caution and watchfulness in its exercise, but so far as he could judge the *difficulties attending its mastery would be no greater* than those he had already faced in the study of cycling It was that analogy, perhaps quite as much as the feeling that he would be unwelcome in the Long Dragon, that drove him out after supper into the lane beyond the gas works to rehearse a few miracles in private

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He awoke at his usual hour and was pensive all through breakfast time, wondering whether his overnight experience might not be a particularly vivid dream At length his mind turned again to cautious

"Well?"

He could think of no way but the truth "I was working a miracle" He tried to speak in an off hand way, but try as he would he couldn't

"Working a—! 'Ere don't you talk rot Working a miracle, indeed! Miracle! Well, that's downright funny! Why, you's the chap that don't believe in miracles Fact is, this is another of your silly conjuring tricks—that's what this is Now, I tell you—"

But Mr Fotheringay never heard what Mr Winch was going to tell him He realised he had given himself away, flung his valuable secret to all the winds of heaven A violent gust of irritation swept him to action He turned on the constable swiftly and fiercely "Here," he said, "I've had enough of this, I have! I'll show you a silly conjuring trick, I will! Go to Hades! Go, now!"

He was alone!

Mr Fotheringay performed no more miracles that night, nor did he trouble to see what had become of his flowering stick He returned to the town, scared and very quiet, and went to his bedroom "Lord!" he said "it s a powerful gift—an extremely powerful gift I didn t hardly mean as much as that Not really . . I wonder what Hades is like!"

He sat on the bed taking off his boots Struck by a happy thought he transferred the constable to San Francisco, and without any more interference with normal causation went soberly to bed In the night he dreamt of the anger of Winch

The next day Mr Fotheringay heard two interesting items of news Someone had planted a most beautiful climbing rose against the elder Mr Gomshott's private house in the Lullaborough Road and the river as far as Rawling's Mill was to be dragged for Constable Winch

Mr Fotheringay was abstracted and thoughtful all

that day, and performed no miracles except certain provisions for Winch, and the miracle of completing his day's work with punctual perfection in spite of all the bee swarm of thoughts that hummed through his mind And the extraordinary abstraction and meekness of his manner was remarked by several people, and made a matter for jesting For the most part he was thinking of Winch

On Sunday evening he went to chapel and oddly enough, Mr Maydig, who took a certain interest in occult matters, preached about "things that are not lawful" Mr Fotheringay was not a regular chapel goer but the system of assertive scepticism, to which I have already alluded, was now very much shaken The tenor of the sermon threw an entirely new light on these novel gifts, and he suddenly decided to consult Mr Maydig immediately after the service So soon as that was determined, he found himself wondering why he had not done so before

Mr Maydig, a lean, excitable man with quite remarkably long wrists and neck, was gratified at a request for a private conversation from a young man whose carelessness in religious matters was a subject for general remark [illegible] he conducted in [illegible] cont gooci him [illegible] standing in to [illegible] front of a cheerful fire—his legs threw a Rhod an arch of shadow on the opposite wall—requested Mr Fotheringay to state his business

At first Mr Fotheringay was a little abashed and found some difficulty in opening the matter "You will scarcely believe me, Mr Mavdig, I am afraid"—[illegible] He tried a question at last [illegible] iracles [illegible] in an extremely [illegible] terrupted again [illegible] ne common sort [illegible] as it might be [illegible]

sitting here now, might have some sort of twist inside him that made him able to do things by his will"

"It's possible," said Mr Maydig "Something of the sort, perhaps, is possible"

"If I might make free with something here, I think I might show you by a sort of experiment," said Mr Fotheringay "Now, take that tobacco jar on the table, for instance What I want to know is whether what I am going to do with it is a miracle or not Just half a minute, Mr Maydig, please"

He knitted his brows pointed to the tobacco jar and said "Be a bowl of vi'lets"

The tobacco jar did as it was ordered

Mr Maydig started violently at the change, and stood looking from the thaumaturgist to the bowl of flowers He said nothing Presently he ventured to lean over the table and smell the violets, they were fresh picked and very fine ones Then he stared at Mr Fotheringay again

"How did you do that?" he asked

Mr Fotheringay pulled his moustache "Just told it—and there you are Is that a miracle, or is it black art, or what is it? And what do you think's the matter with me? That's what I want to ask"

"It's a most extraordinary occurrence"

[illegible] at I could [illegible] e sudden [illegible] and that's [illegible]

"Is *that*—the only thing Could you do other things besides that?"

"Lord yes!" said Mr Fotheringay "Just any thing" He thought, and suddenly recalled a conjuring entertainment he had seen "Here!" He pointed "Change into a bowl of fish—no, not that—change into a glass bowl full of water with goldfish swim ming in it That's better! You see that, Mr. Maydig?"

"It's astonishing It's incredible You are either a most extraordinary But no—"

"I could change it into anything," said Mr Fotheringay "Just anything Here! be a pigeon, will you?"

In another moment a blue pigeon was fluttering round the room and making Mr Maydig duck every time it came near him "Stop there, will you," said Mr Fotheringay, and the pigeon hung motionless in the air "I could change it back to a bowl of flowers" he said and after replacing the pigeon on the table worked that miracle "I expect you will want your pipe in a bit," he said, and restored the tobacco jar

Mr Maydig had followed all these later changes in a sort of ejaculatory silence He stared at Mr Fotheringay and, in a very gingerly manner, picked up the tobacco jar, examined it, replaced it on the table "*Well!*" was the only expression of his feelings

"Now, after that it's easier to explain what I came about" said Mr Fotheringay, and proceeded to a lengthy and involved narrative of his strange experiences, beginning with the affair of the lamp in the Long Dragon and complicated by persistent allusions to Winch As he went on, the transient pride Mr Maydig's consternation had caused passed away he became the very ordinary Mr Fotheringay of everyday intercourse again Mr Maydig listened intently, the tobacco jar in his hand, and his bearing changed also with the course of the narrative Presently, while Mr Fotheringay was dealing with the miracle of the third egg the minister interrupted with a fluttering extended hand —

"It is possible," he said "It is credible It is amazing of course, but it reconciles a number of difficulties The power to work miracles is a gift—a peculiar quality like genius or second sight—hitherto it has come very rarely and to exceptional people But in this case . . . I have always wondered at the miracles of

Mahomet, and at Yogi's miracles, and the miracles of Madame Blavatsky But, of course! Yes, it is simply a gift! It carries out so beautifully the arguments of that great thinker"—Mr Maydig's voice sank—"his Grace the Duke of Argyll Here we plumb some profounder law—deeper than the ordinary laws of nature. Yes—yes. Go on Go on!"

Mr Fotheringay proceeded to tell of his misadventure with Winch and Mr Maydig, no longer overawed or scared began to jerk his limbs about and interject astonishment "It's this what troubled me most," proceeded Mr Fotheringay, "it's this I'm most mightly in want of advice for of course he's at San Francisco—wherever San Francisco may be—but of course it's awkward for both of us, as you'll see, Mr Maydig I don't see how he can understand what has happened, and I dare say he's scared and exasperated something tremendous, and trying to get at me I dare say he keeps on starting off to come here I send him back, by a miracle, every few hours, when I think of it. And of course that's a thing he won't be able to understand, and it's bound to annoy him, and, of course, if he takes a ticket every time it will cost him a lot of money I done the best I could for him, but of course it's difficult for him to put himself in my place. I thought afterwards that his clothes might have got scorched, you know—if Hades is all it's supposed to be—before I shifted him In that case I suppose they'd have locked him up in San Francisco Of course I willed him a new suit of clothes on him directly I thought of it. But, you see, I'm already in a deuce of a tangle—"

Mr Maydig looked serious "I see you are in a tangle Yes, it's a difficult position How you are to end it " He became diffuse and inconclusive.

"However, we'll leave Winch for a little and discuss the larger question I don't think this is a case of the black art or anything of the sort. I don't think there is any taint of criminality about it at all. Mr.

Fotheringay—none whatever, unless you are suppressing material facts No, it's miracles—pure miracles—miracles, if I may say so, of the very highest class"

He began to pace the hearthrug and gesticulate, while Mr Fotheringay sat with his arm on the table and his head on his arm, looking worried "I don't see how I'm to manage about Winch," he said

"A gift of working miracles—apparently a very powerful gift," said Mr Maydig, "will find a way about Winch—never fear My dear Sir, you are a most important man—a man of the most astonishing possibilities As evidence, for example! And in other ways the things you may do"

"Yes *I've* thought of a thing or two," said Mr Fotheringay "But—some of the things came a bit twisty You saw that fish at first? Wrong sort of bowl and wrong sort of fish And I thought I'd ask some one"

"A proper course," said Mr Maydig "a very proper course—altogether the proper course" He stopped and looked at Mr Fotheringay "It's practically an unlimited gift Let us test your powers, for instance If they really *are* If they really are all they seem to be"

And so, incredible as it may seem, in the study of the little house behind the Congregational Chapel on the evening of Sunday, Nov 10, 1896, Mr Fotheringay, egged on and inspired by Mr Maydig, began to work miracles The reader's attention is specially and definitely called to the date He will object probably has already objected, that certain points in this story are improbable, that if any things of the sort already described had indeed occurred they would have been in all the papers a year ago The details immediately following he will find particularly hard to accept because among other things they involve the conclusion that he or she the reader in question must have been killed in a violent and unprecedented manner more

than a year ago Now a miracle is nothing if not improbable, and as a matter of fact the reader *was* killed in a violent and unprecedented manner a year ago In the subsequent course of this story that will become perfectly clear and credible, as every right minded and reasonable reader will admit But this is not the place for the end of the story, being but little beyond the hither side of the middle. And at first the miracles worked by Mr Fotheringay were timid little miracles —little things with the cups and parlour fitments, as feeble as the miracles of Theosophists, and, feeble as they were, they were received with awe by his collaborator He would have preferred to settle the Winch business out of hand, but Mr Maydig would not let him But after they had worked a dozen of these domestic trivialities, their sense of power grew, their

conducted Mr Fotheringay was certainly ill laid and uninviting as refreshment for two industrious miracle workers, but they were seated, and Mr Maydig was descanting in sorrow rather than in anger upon his housekeeper's shortcomings, before it occurred to Mr Fotheringay that an opportunity lay before him "Don't you think, Mr Maydig,' he said, "if it isn't a liberty, I—'

'My dear Mr Fotheringay! Of course! No—I didn't think"

Mr Fotheringay waved his hand "What shall we have?" he said, in a large, inclusive spirit, and, at Mr Maydig's order, revised the supper very thoroughly "As for me," he said, eyeing Mr Maydig's selection, "I am always particularly fond of a tankard of stout and a nice Welsh rarebit, and I'll order that I ain't much given to Burgundy," and forthwith stout and Welsh rarebit promptly appeared at his command

They sat long at the r s pper tall ng l ke eq als as Mr F ther ngay pre ently perce ve l w h a gl w of s rpr se and gra fica n of all the n racles they wo ld presen ly wo An l by the b e Mr Ma l g sad Mr Fother ngay I n gl t p rl aps be able to help you— n a d est e way

D n t q te f ll w sa l Mr May l g pour ng out a glass of m ac lo s ld B rg n ly

Mr Fother ng y helped h mself to a second Welsh rareb t o t of vacancy an l t k a mo tl f l I was tl nk ng he sa l I m ght be able (*clun clum*) to work (*chum ch t*) a m racle w th Mrs M ncl n (*chum chum*)— nake her a better w man

Mr May l g pt d vn the glass an l looked do btful She s— Sle str ngly objects to interference you know Mr F ther ngay And—as a matter of fact— it s well past eleven and she s pr bably in bed and asleep Do yo tl nk on the wh le—

Mr Fo her ngay co ns lere l these object ons "I don t see that it sho l ln t be done n her sleep"

For a t ne Mr Mav l g opp se l the dea and then he y el le l Mr F ther nz y ss ed h s or lers and a l tle less at their ease perl aps the two gen lemen procee led s h the r repast Mr May l g was enla g ng on the cl an es he n ght expect n h s ho sekeeper next day w h an opti s n that seemed even to Mr F ther ngay s s pper sentes a l ttle fo ce l and hect c when a ser es of conf ed no es from ep a rs began The r e es exchanged n errogat ons an l Mr Mayl g left tle ro n hast ly Mr F tl er ngay hear l h n call ing p to h s ho sekeeper and then his l ootsteps go ng sof ly p to l er

In a m n te or so the m n s er ret rned h s ep l gl h s face ra l ant Won lerful! he sa d "and to h ng! Most to h ng!

He be an pae ng the hearthrng "A repen ance—a mos t l ng repentance—tl r gh the crack of the door P r woman! A most wonderful change? She

had got up She m st have got t p at once She had got up out of her sleep to s nash a p vate bottle of brandy n her box And to confess t too But *th s g ves s—it opens—a m st a az ng vis a of possi b l es If we can work th s n raculous change in her*

"The th ng s unl m ted seem ngly sa d Mr Fother ngay And abo t Mr W ncl —"

"Al ge l er t nl m ted And from the hearthrug Mr Mayd g wav ng the Winch d ff c lty as de n folded a ser es of wonderful proposals—proposals he invented as he vent along

Now what those pr p sals were does not concern the essen als of th s sto y S ffce t that they were des gned n a sp r t of infin te benevolence the sort of bene ence that used to be called pos pran l al S ffice it too that the problem of Winch re na ned t nsolved Nor s necessary to descr be how far that ser es got to t s f lfil nent There were ast n h ng changes The small ho rs fo nd Mr Mayl o and Mr F her ngay career ng across the ch lly market-sq are un ler the s ll moon in a sort of ecst sy of tha mat rgy Mr Mayd g all flap and ges re Mr Fo her ngay sl ort and br s l ng and no longer abashed at h s g ea ness They had re formed every dr nkard n the Parl amentary d v s on changed all the beer and alc hol to water (Mr Mayl g *had* overr le l Mr Fothe ngay on th s po nt) they had further gre ly improve l the ra lway co nm n cat on of the place dra ned Fl n ler s s vamp mpro ed the so l of One Tree H ll and c re l the V car s vart And they were go ng to see what co ld be done w h he nj red p er at So h Br d e The place gaspe l Mr May d g "wo t be the same place to morrow How surpr ed and tha kf l ever one w ll be! And just *at that mo nent the ch rch clock str ck three*

I say sa d Mr Fother ngay that s three o clock! I must be get ng back I ve got to be at business by eight And bes des Mrs W nms—

"We're only beginning," said Mr Maydig full of the sweetness of unlimited power "We're only beginning Think of all the good we're doing When people wake—"

"But—,' said Mr Fotheringay

Mr Maydig gripped his arm suddenly His eyes were bright and wild "My dear chap," he said "there's no hurry Look"—he pointed to the moon at the zenith—"Joshua!"

Joshua?" said Mr Fotheringay

'Joshua," said Mr Maydig 'Why not? Stop it"

Mr Fotheringay looked at the moon

'That's a bit tall," he said after a pause

'Why not?" said Mr Maydig "Of course it doesn't stop You stop the rotation of the earth you know Time stops It isn't as if we were doing harm

'H m!' said Mr Fotheringay "Well" He sighed "I'll try Here—'

He buttoned up his jacket and addressed himself to the habitable globe, with as good an ass mption of confidence as lay in his power "Jest stop rotating will you,' said Mr Fotheringay

Incontinently he was flying head over heels through the air at the rate of dozens of miles a minute In spite of the innumerable circles he was describing per second he thought for thought is wonderful—sometimes as sluggish as flowing pitch, sometimes as instantaneous as light He thought in a second and willed "Let me come down safe and sound What ever else happens, let me down safe and sound'

He willed it only just in time, for his clothes heated by his rapid flight through the air, were already beginning to singe He came down with a forcible, but by no means injurious bump in what appeared to be a mound of fresh turned earth A large mass of metal and masonry, extraordinarily like the clock tower in the

middle of the market square, hit the earth near him, ricochetted over him, and flew into stonework bricks, and masonry, like a bursting bomb A hurtling cow hit one of the larger blocks and smashed like an egg There was a crash that made all the most violent crashes of his past life seem like the sound of falling dust, and this was followed by a descending series of lesser crashes A vast wind roared throughout earth and heaven, so that he could scarcely lift his head to look For a while he was too breathless and astonished even to see where he was or what had happened And his first movement was to feel his head and reassure himself that his streaming hair was still his own

"Lord!" gasped Mr Fotheringay, scarce able to speak for the gale, "I've had a squeak! What's gone wrong? Storms and thunder And only a minute ago a fine night It's Maydig set me on to this sort of thing *What* a wind! If I go on fooling in this way I m bound to have a thundering accident!

"Where's Maydig?

"What a confounded mess everything's in!"

He looked about him so far as his flapping jacket would permit The appearance of things was really extremely strange "The sky's all right anyhow," said Mr Fotheringay "And that's about all that is all right And even there it looks like a terrific gale coming up But there's the moon overhead Just as it was just now Bright as midday But as for the rest— Where's the village? Where's—where's anything? And what on earth set this wind a blowing? *I* didn't order no wind"

Mr Fotheringay struggled to get to his feet in vain, and after one failure, remained on all fours, holding on He surveyed the moonlit world to leeward, with the tails of his jacket streaming over his head "There's something seriously wrong," said Mr Fotheringay "And what it is—goodness knows"

Far and wide nothing was visible in the white glare

through the haze of dust that drove before a screaming gale but tumbled masses of earth and heaps of inchoate ruins, no trees, no houses no familiar shapes, only a wilderness of disorder vanishing at last into the darkness beneath the whirling columns and streamers the lightnings and thunderings of a swiftly rising storm Near him in the livid glare was something that might once have been an elm tree, a smashed mass of splinters, shivered from boughs to base, and further a twisted mass of iron girders—only too evidently the viaduct—rose out of the piled confusion

You see, when Mr Fotheringay had arrested the rotation of the solid globe, he had made no stipulation concerning the trifling movables upon its surface And the earth spins so fast that the surface at its equator is travelling at rather more than a thousand miles an hour, and in these latitudes at more than half that pace So that the village, and Mr Maydig and Mr Fotheringay, and everybody and everything had been jerked violently forward at about nine miles per second—that is to say, much more violently than if they had been fired out of a cannon And every human being, every living creature, every house, and every tree—all the world as we know it—had been so jerked and smashed and utterly destroyed That was all

These things Mr Fotheringay did not of course, fully appreciate But he perceived that his miracle had miscarried, and with that a great disgust of miracles came upon him He was in darkness now, for the clouds had swept together and blotted out his momentary glimpse of the moon and the air was full of fitful struggling tortured wraiths of hail A great roaring of wind and waters filled earth and sky, and, peering under his hand through the dust and sleet to windward he saw by the play of the lightnings a vast wall of water pouring towards him

"Maydig!" screamed Mr Fotheringay's feeble voice amid the elemental uproar "Here!—Maydig!"

"Stop!" cried Mr Fotheringay to the advancing water "Oh, for goodness' sake, stop!"

"Just a moment," said Mr. Fotheringay to the lightnings and thunder "Stop jest a moment while I collect my thoughts . And now what shall I do?" he said 'What *shall* I do? Lord! I wish Maydig was about"

"I know," said Mr Fotheringay "And for goodness sake let's have it right *this* time"

He remained on all fours, leaning against the wind, very intent to have everything right

"Ah!" he said "Let nothing what I'm going to order happen until I say 'Off!' Lord! I wish I'd thought of that before!"

He lifted his little voice against the whirlwind, shouting louder and louder in the vain desire to hear himself speak "Now then!—here goes! Mind about that what I said just now In the first place, when all I've got to say is done, let me lose my miraculous power, let my will become just like anybody else's will, and all these dangerous miracles be stopped I don't like them I'd rather I didn't work 'em Ever so much That's the first thing And the second is—let me be back just before the miracles begin, let everything be just as it was before that blessed lamp turned up It's a big job, but it's the last Have you got it? No more miracles, everything as it was—me back in the Long Dragon just before I drank my half pint That's it! Yes"

He dug his fingers into the mould, closed his eyes, and said "Off!"

Everything became perfectly still He perceived that he was standing erect

"*So you say,*" *said a voice*

He opened his eyes He was in the bar of the Long Dragon, arguing about miracles with Toddy Beamish He had a vague sense of some great thing forgotten that instantaneously passed You see, except for the loss of

his miraculous powers, everything was back as it had been, his mind and memory therefore were now just as they had been at the time when this story began So [illegible]

miracles

"I tell you that miracles, properly speaking, can't possibly happen," he said, "whatever you like to hold And I m prepared to prove it up to the hilt"

That's what *you* think," said Toddy Beamish, and "Prove it if you can"

"Lookv here, Mr Beamish" said Mr Fotheringay "Let us clearly understand what a miracle is It's something contrariwise to the course of nature done by power of Will . . ."

TWELVE STORIES AND A DREAM

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STORY THE FIRST

Filmer

IN truth the mastery of flying was the work of thousands of men—this man a suggestion and that an experiment, until at last only one vigorous intellectual effort was needed to finish the work But the inexorable injustice of the popular mind has decided that of all these thousands, one man, and that a man who never flew should be chosen as the discoverer, just as it has chosen to honour Watt as the discoverer of steam and Stephenson of the steam engine And surely of all honoured names none is so grotesquely and tragically honoured as poor Filmer's, the timid, intellectual creature who solved the problem over which the world had hung perplexed and a little fearful for so many generations the man who pressed the button that has changed peace and warfare and wellnigh every condition of human life and happiness Never has that recurring wonder of the littleness of the scientific man in the face of the greatness of his science found such an amazing exemplification Much concerning Filmer is,

and must remain, profoundly obscure—Filmers attract no Boswells—but the essential facts and the concluding scene are clear enough, and there are letters, and notes and casual allusions to piece the whole together And this is the story one makes, putting this thing with that, of Filmer's life and death

The first authentic trace of Filmer on the page of history is a document in which he applies for admission as a paid student in physics to the Government laboratories at South Kensington, and therein he describes himself as the son of a "military bootmaker" ("cobbler" in the vulgar tongue) of Dover, and lists his various examination proofs of a high proficiency in chemistry and mathematics With a certain want of dignity he seeks to enhance these attainments by a profession of poverty and disadvantages, and he writes of the laboratory as the "gaol" of his ambitions, a slip which reinforces his claim to have devoted himself exclusively to the exact sciences The document is endorsed in a manner that shows Filmer was admitted to this coveted opportunity, but until quite recently no traces of his success in the Government institution could be found

It has now, however, been shown that in spite of his professed zeal for research, Filmer, before he had held this scholarship a year, was tempted by the possibility of a small increase in his immediate income, to abandon it in order to become one of the nine pence-an hour computers employed by a well known Professor in his vicarious conduct of those extensive researches of his in solar physics—researches which are still a matter of perplexity to astronomers Afterwards, for the space of seven years, save for the pass lists of the London University, in which he is seen to climb slowly to a double first class B Sc, in mathematics and chemistry, there is no evidence of how Filmer passed his life No one knows how or where he lived, though it seems highly probable that he continued to support himself by tea h

ing while he prosecuted the studies necessary for this distinction And then, oddly enough, one finds him mentioned in the correspondence of Arthur Hicks, the poet

"You remember Filmer," Hicks writes to his friend Vance, "well *he* hasn't altered a bit, the same hostile mumble and the nasty chin—how *can* a man contrive to be always three days from shaving?—and a sort of furtive air of being engaged in sneaking in front of one even his coat and that frayed collar of his show no further signs of the passing of years He was writing in the library and I sat down beside him in the name of God's charity, whereupon he deliberately insulted me by covering up his memoranda It seems he has some brilliant research on hand that he suspects me of all people—with a Bodley Booklet a printing!—of stealing He has taken remarkable honours at the University—

as the

had t

one m

I was doing—with a sort of comparative accent, and his arm was spread nervously, positively a protecting arm, over the paper that hid the precious idea—his one hopeful idea

"'Poetry,' he said, 'poetry And what do you profess to teach in it, Hicks?'

"The thing's a provincial professorling in the very act of budding, and I thank the Lord devoutly that but for the precious gift of indolence I also might have gone this way to D Sc and destruction"

A curious little vignette that I am inclined to think

of Arts—he had become manager to a great plastic substance manufactory—and at that time, it is now

known, he was a member of the Aeronautical Society, albeit he contributed nothing to the discussions of that body, preferring no doubt to mature his great conception without external assistance And within two years of that paper before the Society of Arts he was hastily taking out a number of patents and proclaiming in various undignified ways the completion of the divergent inquiries which made his flying machine possible. The first definite statement to that effect appeared in a half penny evening paper through the agency of a man who lodged in the same house with Filmer His final haste after his long laborious secret patience seems to have been due to a needless panic, Bootle, the notorious American scientific quack, having made an announcement that Filmer interpreted wrongly as an anticipation of his idea

Now what precisely was Filmer's idea? Really a very simple one Before his time the pursuit of aeronautics had taken two divergent lines, and had developed on the one hand balloons—large apparatus lighter than air easy in ascent, and comparatively safe in descent, but floating helplessly before any breeze that took them, and on the other, flying machines that flew only in theory—vast flat structures heavier than air, propelled and kept up by heavy engines and for the most part smashing at the first descent But, neglecting the fact that the inevitable final collapse rendered them impossible the weight of the flying machines gave them the theoretical advantage, that they could go through the air against a wind, a necessary condition if aerial navigation was to have any practical value It is Filmer's particular merit that he perceived the way in which the contrasted and hitherto incompatible merits of balloon and heavy flying machine might be combined in one a[illegible] which should be at choice either heavier or li[illegible] air He took hints from the contractile bl[illegible] and the pneumatic cavities of birds He de[illegible]ement of contractile and absolutely

closed balloons which when expanded could lift the actual flying apparatus with ease, and when retracted by the complicated "musculature" he wove about them, were withdrawn almost completely into the frame and he built the large framework which these balloons sustained of hollow, rigid tubes, the air in which by an ingenious contrivance, was automatically pumped out as the apparatus fell and which then remained exhausted so long as the aeronaut desired There were no wings or propellers to his machine, such as there had been to all previous aeroplanes, and the only engine required was the compact and powerful little appliance needed to contract the balloons He perceived that such an apparatus as he had devised might rise with frame exhausted and balloons expanded to a considerable height might then contract its balloons and let the air into its frame, and by an adjustment of its weights slide down the air in any desired direction As it fell it would accumulate velocity and at the same time lose weight and the momentum accumulated by its downrush could be utilised by means of a shifting of its weights to drive it up in the air again as the balloons expanded This conception, which is still the struc-

crowded upon him in the heyday of his fame—"ungrudingly and unsparingly gave" His particular difficulty was the elastic lining of the contractile balloon He found he needed a new substance and in the discovery and manufacture of that new substance he had, as he never failed to impress upon the interviewers, "performed a far more arduous work than even in the actual achievement of my seemingly greater discovery"

But it must not be imagined that these interviews followed hard upon Filmer's proclamation of his invention An interval of nearly five years elapsed during

which he timidly remained at his rubber factory—he seems to have been entirely dependent on his small income from this source—making misdirected attempts to assure a quite indifferent public that he really *had* invented what he had invented He occupied the greater part of his leisure in the composition of letters to the scientific and daily press, and so forth stating precisely the net result of his contrivances, and demanding financial aid That alone would have sufficed for the suppression of his letters He spent such holidays as he could arrange in unsatisfactory interviews with the door keepers of leading London papers—he was singularly not adapted for inspiring hall porters with confidence—and he positively attempted to induce the War Office to take up his work with him There remains a confidential letter from Major General Volleyfire to the Earl of Frogs "The man's a crank and a bounder to boot," says the Major General in his bluff, sensible army way, and so left it open for the Japanese to secure, as they subsequently did, the priority in this side of warfare—a priority they still to our great discomfort retain

And then by a stroke of luck the membrane Filmer had invented for his contractile balloon was discovered to be useful for the valves of a new oil engine, and he obtained the means for making a trial model of his invention He threw up his rubber factory appointment desisted from all further writing, and, with a certain secrecy that seems to have been an inseparable characteristic of all his proceedings set to work upon the apparatus He seems to have directed the making of its parts and collected most of it in a room in Shoreditch, but its final putting together was done at Dymchurch, in Kent He did not make the affair large enough to carry a man, but he made an extremely ingenious use of what were then called the Marconi rays to control its flight The first flight of this first practicable flying machine took place over some fields

near Burford Bridge near Hythe in Kent and Filmer followed and controlled its flight upon a specially constructed motor tricycle

The flight was considering all things an amazing success The apparatus was brought in a cart from Dymchurch to Burford Bridge ascended there to a height of nearly three hundred feet swooped thence

scrambled over the intervening dyke advanced perhaps twenty yards towards his triumph threw out his arms in a strange gesticulation and fell down in a dead faint Everyone could then recall the ghastliness of his features and all the evidences of extreme excitement they had observed throughout the trial things they might otherwise have forgotten Afterwards in the inn he had an unaccountable gust of hysterical weeping

Altogether there were not twenty witnesses of this affair and those for the most part uneducated men The New Romney doctor saw the ascent but not the *descent his horse being frightened by the electrical* apparatus on Filmer's tricycle and giving him a nasty spill Two members of the Kent constabulary watched the affair from a cart in an unofficial spirit and a grocer calling round the Marsh for orders and two lady cyclists seem almost to complete the list of educated people There were two reporters present one representing a Folkestone paper and the other being a *fourth-class* interviewer and symposium journalist whose expenses down Filmer anxious as ever for adequate advertisement—and now quite realising the way in which adequate advertisement may be obtained—had paid The latter was one of those writers who can throw a convincing air of unreality over the most credible events and his half facetious account of the affair appeared in the magazine page of a popular journal But happily

for F lmer this person s colloq al methods were more convin ing He *went* to offer s ne f rther s reed pon the s bject to Bangl st tle pr pr et r of the *New Paper* and one of the ablest and nost un cr p l s men in l nd n j rnalis and Bangl rst in ta tly se zed up n the sit ati n The inter ewer van les from the na ra e no d bt very d l tl lly ren nera ed and Bangl rst Bangl rst l nself d ble ch n grey tw l t t abl en v ce g st res and all appears at Dym h r h f ll w ng l s large t nr valled j urnal e nose He had seen the wl le tl ng at a glance j st what it was and *what* it n ght be

At h s ch as t were F l ner s long pent invest ga t ns e ploded into fa e He nstan ly and m st mag n h en l was a B m One t rns ove the files of the jo rnals of the year 1907 with a q te incred lous rec gn on of how swift and fla ng the boon f those da s c ld be The J ly papers kn w no l ng of fl ng see nothing in fl ng state by a n ost effect ve silence that men never w ld c ll or sl o ld fly In A g t flying and F l er and fl ng and pa a ch tes and aer al tactics and the Japanese C vern nen and F l er and again flying sl lered the war in Y nnan and the g ll ines of Upper Greenland off the l a l ng p ge And l angl rst had g en ten tho sand po nds and f rther Bangl st was g ng five tho sand p ds and Bangl rst had dev ed h s well known magn ficent (b t h tl ert ster le) private labora r es and se eral acres of land near h pr vate res dence on the S rrey h lls to the stren o s and v olent com plet n—Banghurst fash n—of the l fe s ze practicable flying macl ne Mean l ile in the s ght of pr leged m lt t des in the walled gar len of the Bangh rs town res lence in Fulham F l ner was exh b ed at weekly garden parties p tting the w rk ng m del thr gh its paces At en rm s in t al e st h t w h a final pr fit the *New Paper* presente l ts rea lers with a bea tiful photographic souven r of the first of these occas ons

Here again the correspondence of Arthur Hicks and his friend Vance comes to our aid.

"I saw Filmer in his glory," he writes with just the touch of envy natural to his position as a poet *passé*. "The *man is* brushed and shaved, dressed in the fashion of a Royal Institution Afternoon Lecturer, the very newest shape in frock coats and long patent shoes, and altogether in a state of extraordinary streakiness between an owlish great man and a scared abashed self-conscious bounder cruelly exposed. He hasn't a touch of colour in the skin of his face, his head juts forward and those queer little dark amber eyes of his watch furtively round him for his fame. His clothes fit perfectly and yet sit upon him as though he had bought them ready made. He speaks in a mumble still, but he says, you perceive, indistinctly enormous self-assertive things, he backs into the rear of groups by instinct if Banghurst drops the line for a minute, and when he walks across Banghurst's lawn one perceives him a little out of breath and going jerky, and that his weak white hands are clenched. His is a state of tension—horrible tension. And he is the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age—the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age! What strikes one so forcibly about him is that he didn't somehow quite expect it ever, at any rate not at all like this. Banghurst is about everywhere, the energetic M.C. of his great little occasion, and I swear he will have everyone down on his lawn there before he has finished with the engine he had bagged; he p[illegible] e[illegible] n t r[illegible] ve[illegible] erlav, and he blesses his heart [illegible] didn't look particularly [illegible] size on the very first occasion. Conceive it! Filmer! Our obscure unwashed Filmer, the Glory of British science! Duchesses crowd upon him, beautiful bold peeresses say in their beautiful clear loud voices—have you noticed how penetrating the great ladies are becoming nowadays?—'Oh, Mr. Filmer, how *did* you do it?'

Common men on the edge of things are too remote for the answer. One imagines something in the way of

that interview, 'toil ungrudgingly and unsparingly given, Madam, and, perhaps—I don't know—but perhaps a little special aptitude'"

So far Hicks, and the photographic supplement to the *New Paper* is in sufficient harmony with the description In one picture the machine swings down towards the river, and the tower of Fulham church appears below it through a gap in the elms, and in another, Filmer sits at his guiding batteries, and the great and beautiful of the earth stand around him, with Banghurst massed modestly but resolutely in the rear The grouping is oddly apposite Occluding much of Banghurst, and looking with a pensive, speculative expression at Filmer, stands the Lady Mary Elkinghorn, still beautiful, in spite of the breath of scandal and her eight-and-thirty years the only person whose face does not admit a perception of the camera that was in the act of snapping them all

So much for the exterior facts of the story, but, after all they are very exterior facts About the real interest of the business one is necessarily very much in the dark How was Filmer feeling at the time? How much was a certain unpleasant anticipation present inside that very new and fashionable frock-coat? He was in the halfpenny, penny, sixpenny, and more expensive papers alike, and acknowledged by the whole world as "the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age" He had invented a practicable flying machine, and every day down among the Surrey hills the life sized model was getting ready And when it was ready, it followed as a clear inevitable consequence of his having invented and made it—everybody in the world, indeed, seemed to take it for granted, there wasn't a gap anywhere in that serried front of anticipation—that he would proudly and cheerfully get aboard it, ascend with it, and fly

But we know now pretty clearly that simple pride and cheerfulness in such an act were singularly out of harmony with Filmer's private constitution It occurred

to no one at the time, but there the fact is We can guess with some confidence now that it must have been drifting about in his mind a great deal during the day, and, from a little note to his physician complaining of persistent insomnia we have the soundest reason for supposing it dominated his nights—the idea that it would be after all, in spite of his theoretical security, an abominably sickening, uncomfortable, and dangerous thing for him to flap about in nothingness a thousand feet or so in the air It must have dawned upon him quite early in the period of being the Greatest Discoverer of This or Any Age, the vision of doing this and that with an extensive void below Perhaps some when in his youth he had looked down a great height or fallen down in some excessively uncomfortable way, perhaps some habit of sleeping on the wrong side had resulted in that disagreeable falling nightmare one knows, and given him his horror, of the strength of that horror there remains now not a particle of doubt

Apparently he had never weighed this duty of flying in his earlier days of research the machine had been his end, but now things were opening out beyond his end, and particularly this giddy whirl up above there He was a Discoverer and he had Discovered But he was not a Flying Man, and it was only now that he was beginning to perceive clearly that he was expected to fly Yet however much the thing was present in his mind he gave no expression to it until the very end, and meanwhile he went to and fro from Banghurst's magnificent laboratories, and was interviewed and lionised, and wore good clothes and ate good food, and lived in an

After a time, the weekly gatherings in Fulham ceased The model had failed one day just for a moment to respond to Filmer's guidance, or he had been distracted

by the compliments of an archbishop. At any rate, it suddenly dug its nose into the air just a little too steeply as the archbishop was sailing through a Latin quotation for all the world like an archbishop in a book, and it came down in the Fulham Road within three yards of a 'bus horse. It stood for a second perhaps, astonishing and in its attitude astonished, then it crumpled, shivered into pieces, and the 'bus horse was incidentally killed.

Filmer lost the end of the archiepiscopal compliment. He stood up and stared as his invention swooped out of sight and reach of him. His long, white hands still gripped his useless apparatus. The archbishop followed his skyward stare with an apprehension unbecoming in an archbishop.

Then came the crash and the shouts and uproar from the road to relieve Filmer's tension. "*My God!*" he whispered, and sat down.

Everyone else almost was staring to see where the machine had vanished, or rushing into the house.

The making of the big machine progressed all the more rapidly for this. Over its making presided Filmer, always a little slow and very careful in his manner, always with a growing preoccupation in his mind. His care over the strength and soundness of the apparatus was prodigious. The slightest doubt, and he delayed everything until the doubtful part could be replaced. Wilkinson, his senior assistant, fumed at some of these delays, which, he insisted, were for the most part unnecessary. Banghurst magnified the patient certitude of Filmer in the *New Paper*, and reviled it bitterly to his wife, and MacAndrew, the second assistant, approved Filmer's wisdom. "We're not wanting a *fiasco*, man," said MacAndrew. "He's perfectly well advised."

And whenever an opportunity arose Filmer would expound to Wilkinson and MacAndrew just exactly how every part of the flying machine was to be controlled and worked, so that in effect they would be just as

capable, and even more capable, when at last the time came, of guiding it through the skies

Now I should imagine that if Filmer had seen fit at this stage to define just what he was feeling, and to take a definite line in the matter of his ascent he might have escaped that painful ordeal quite easily If he had had it clearly in his mind he could have done endless things He would surely have found no difficulty with a specialist to demonstrate a weak heart, or something gastric or pulmonary, to stand in his way—that is the line I am astonished he did not take—or he might, had he been man enough have declared simply and finally that he did not intend to do the thing But the fact is though the dread was hugely present in his mind the thing was by no means sharp and clear I fancy that all through this period he kept telling himself that when the occasion came he would find himself equal to it He was like a man just gripped by a great illness, who says he feels a little out of sorts and expects to be better presently Meanwhile he delayed the completion of the machine and let the assumption that he was going to fly it take root and flourish exceedingly about him He even accepted anticipatory compliments on his courage And barring this secret squeamishness there can be no doubt he found all the praise and distinction and fuss he got a delightful and even intoxicating draught

The Lady Mary Elkinghorn made things a little more complicated for him

How *that* began was a subject of inexhaustible speculation to Hicks Probably in the beginning she was just a little "nice" to him with that impartial partiality of hers, and it may be that to her eyes, standing out conspicuously as he did ruling his monster in the upper air, he had a distinction that Hicks was not disposed to find And somehow they must have had a moment of sufficient isolation, and the great Discoverer a moment of sufficient courage for something just a little personal

to be mumbled or blurted However it began, there is no doubt that it did begin, and presently became quite perceptible to a world accustomed to find in the proceedings of the Lady Mary Elkinghorn a matter of entertainment It complicated things, because the state of love in such a virgin mind as Filmer's would brace his resolution, if not sufficiently, at any rate considerably, towards facing a danger he feared, and hampered him in such attempts at evasion as would otherwise be natural and congenial

It remains a matter for speculation just how the Lady Mary felt for Filmer and just what she thought of him At thirty eight one may have gathered much wisdom and still be not altogether wise, and the imagination still functions actively enough in creating glamours and effecting the impossible He came before her eyes as a very central man, and that always counts, and he had powers, unique powers as it seemed, at any rate in the air The performance with the model had just a touch of the quality of a potent incantation, and women have ever displayed an unreasonable disposition to imagine that when a man has powers he must necessarily have Power Given so much, and what was not good in Filmer's manner and appearance became an added merit He was modest, he hated display, but given an occasion where *true* qualities are needed, then —then one would see!

The late Mrs Bampton thought it wise to convey to Lady Mary her opinion that Filmer, all things considered, was rather a "grub" "He's certainly not a sort of man I have ever met before," said the Lady Mary, with a quite unruffled serenity And Mrs Bampton, after a swift, imperceptible glance at that serenity, decided that so far as saying anything to Lady Mary went, she had done as much as could be expected of her But she said a great deal to other people

And at last, without any undue haste or unseemliness, the day dawned, the great day, when Banghurst had

promised his public—the world in fact—that flying should be finally attained and overcome Filmer saw it dawn, watched even in the darkness before it dawned, *watched its stars fade and the grey and pearly pinks* give place at last to the clear blue sky of a sunny, cloudless day He watched it from the window of his bedroom in the new built wing of Banghurst's Tudor house And as the stars were overwhelmed and the shapes and substances of things grew into being out of the amorphous dark, he must have seen more and more distinctly the festive preparations beyond the beech clumps near the green pavilion in the outer park, the three stands for the privileged spectators, the raw, new fencing of the enclosure, the sheds and workshops, the Venetian masts and fluttering flags that Banghurst had considered essential, black and limp in the breezeless dawn, and amidst all these things a great shape covered with tarpauling A strange and terrible portent for humanity was that shape, a beginning that must surely spread and widen and change and dominate all the affairs of men, but to Filmer it is very doubtful whether [illegible]

[illegible] editor who, before all things, understood compression And about five o'clock, if not before, Filmer left his room and wandered out of the sleeping house into the park, alive by that time with sunlight and birds and squirrels and the fallow deer MacAndrew, who was also an early riser, met him near the machine, and they went and had a look at it together

It is doubtful if Filmer took any breakfast, in spite of the urgency of Banghurst So soon as the guests began to be about in some number he seems to have retreated to his room Thence about ten he went into the shrubbery, very probably because he had seen the Lady Mary Elkinghorn there She was walking up and down, engaged in conversation with her old school

friend, Mrs Brewis Craven, and although Filmer had never met the latter lady before, he joined them and walked beside them for some time There were several silences in spite of the Lady Mary's brilliance The situation was a difficult one, and Mrs Brewis Craven did not master its difficulty "He struck me," she said afterwards with a luminous self contradiction "as a very unhappy person who had something to say, and wanted before all things to be helped to say it But how was one to help him when one didn't know what it was?"

At half past eleven the enclosures for the public in the outer park were crammed, there was an intermittent stream of equipages along the belt which circles the outer park and the house party was dotted over the lawn and shrubbery and the corner of the inner park, in a series of brilliantly attired knots, all making for the flying machine Filmer walked in a group of three with Banghurst who was supremely and conspicuously happy and Sir Theodore Hickle, the president of the Aeronautical Society Mrs Banghurst was close behind with the Lady Mary Elkinghorn, Georgina Hickle, and the Dean of Stays Banghurst was large and copious in speech and such interstices as he left were filled in by Hickle with complimentary remarks to Filmer And Filmer walked between them saying not a word except by way of unavoidable reply Behind, Mrs Banghurst listened to the admirably suitable and shapely conversation of the Dean with that fluttered attention to the ampler clergy ten years of social ascent and ascendency had not cured in her, and the Lady Mary watched no doubt with an entire confidence in the world's disillusionment, the drooping shoulders of the sort of man she had never met before

There was some cheering as the central party came into view of the enclosures, but it was not very unanimous nor invigorating cheering They were within fifty yards of the apparatus when Filmer took a hasty glance over his shoulder to measure the distance of the

ladies behind them, and decided to make the first remark he had initiated since the house had been left His voice was just a little hoarse, and he cut in on Banghurst in mid sentence on Progress

"I say, Banghurst," he said, and stopped

"Yes," said Banghurst

"I wish——" He moistened his lips "I'm not feeling well"

Banghurst stopped dead "Eh?" he shouted

"A queer feeling" Filmer made to move on, but Banghurst was immovable "I don't know I may be better in a minute If not—perhaps . MacAndrew——"

"You're not feeling *well!*" said Banghurst, and stared at his white face

"My dear!" he said, as Mrs Banghurst came up with them, "Filmer says he isn't feeling *well*"

"A little queer," exclaimed Filmer, avoiding the Lady Mary's eyes "It may pass off——"

There was a pause

It came to Filmer that he was the most isolated person in the world

"In any case," said Banghurst, "the ascent must be made Perhaps if you were to sit down somewhere for a moment——"

"It's the crowd I think," said Filmer

There was a second pause Banghurst's eye rested in scrutiny on Filmer, and then swept the sample of public in the enclosure

"It's unfortunate," said Sir Theodore Hickle, "but still—I suppose—— Your assistants—— Of course, if you feel out of condition and disinclined——"

"I don't think Mr Filmer would permit *that* for a moment," said the Lady Mary

"But if Mr Filmer's nerve is run—— It might even be dangerous for him to attempt——" Hickle coughed

"It's just because it's dangerous," began the Lady

Mary, and felt she had made her point of view and Filmer's plain enough

Conflicting motives struggled for Filmer

"I feel I ought to go up," he said, regarding the ground He looked up and met the Lady Mary's eyes "I want to go up," he said, and smiled whitely at her He turned towards Banghurst "If I could just sit down somewhere for a moment out of the crowd and sun——"

Banghurst, at least, was beginning to understand the case 'Come into my little room in the green pavilion," he said "It's quite cool there' He took Filmer by the arm

Filmer turned his face to the Lady Mary Elkinghorn again 'I shall be all right in five minutes" he said 'I'm tremendously sorry——"

The Lady Mary Elkinghorn smiled at him "I couldn't think," he said to Hickle, and obeyed the compulsion of Banghurst's pull

The rest remained watching the two recede

He is so fragile," said the Lady Mary

'He's certainly a highly nervous type,' said the Dean, whose weakness it was to regard the whole world except married clergymen with enormous families, as "neurotic"

"Of course," said Hickle, "it isn't absolutely necessary for him to go up because he has invented——"

"How *could* he avoid it?" asked the Lady Mary, with the faintest shadow of scorn

"It's certainly most unfortunate if he's going to be ill now," said Mrs Banghurst a little severely

"He's not going to be ill," said the Lady Mary, and certainly she had met Filmer's eye

"*You'll* be all right," said Banghurst, as they went towards the pavilion "All you want is a nip of brandy It ought to be you, you know You'll be—you'd get it rough, you know, if you let another man——"

"Oh, I want to go," said Filmer "I shall be all

right As a matter of fact I m almost inclined *now*—— No' I think I'll have that nip of brandy first'

Banghurst took him into the little room and routed out an empty decanter He departed in search of a supply He was gone perhaps five minutes

The history of those five minutes cannot be written At intervals Filmer's face could be seen by the people on the easternmost of the stands erected for spectators against the window pane peering out, and then it would recede and fade Banghurst vanished shouting behind the grand stand, and presently the butler appeared going pavilionward with a tray

The apartment in which Filmer came to his last solution was a pleasant little room very simply furnished with green furniture and an old bureau—for Bang hurst was simple in all his private ways It was hung with little engravings after Morland and it had a shelf of books But as it happened, Banghurst had left a rook rifle he sometimes played with on the top of the desk and on the corner of the mantelshelf was a tin with three or four cartridges remaining in it As Filmer went up and down that room wrestling with his intolerable dilemma he went first towards the neat little rifle athwart the blotting pad and then towards the neat little red label

"22 LONG"

The thing must have jumped into his mind in a moment

Nobody seems to have connected the report with him, though the gun, being fired in a confined space, must have sounded loud, and there were several people in the billiard room, separated from him only by a lath and plaster partition But directly Banghurst's butler opened the door and smelt the sour smell of the smoke, he knew, he says what had happened For the servants at least of Banghurst's household had guessed something of what was going on in Filmer's mind

All through that trying afternoon Banghurst behaved as he held a man should behave in the presence of hopeless disaster, and his guests for the most part succeeded in not insisting upon the fact—though to conceal their perception of it altogether was impossible—that Banghurst had been pretty elaborately and completely swindled by the deceased The public in the enclosure, Hicks told me, dispersed "like a party that has been ducking a welsher,' and there wasn't a soul in the train to London, it seems, who hadn't known all along that flying was a quite impossible thing for man "But he might have tried it," said many, "after carrying the thing so far"

In the evening, when he was comparatively alone, Banghurst broke down and went on like a man of clay I have been told he wept, which must have made an imp ing scene, and he certainly said Filmer had ruined his life, and offered and sold the whole apparatus to MacAndrew for half a crown "I've been thinking—" said MacAndrew at the conclusion of the bargain, and stopped

The next morning the name of Filmer was, for the first time, less conspicuous in the *New Paper* than in any other daily paper in the world. The rest of the world's instructors, with varying emphasis, according to their dignity and the degree of competition between themselves and the *New Paper*, proclaimed the "Entire Failure of the New Flying Machine," and "Suicide of the Impostor" But in the district of North Surrey the reception of the news was tempered by a perception of unusual aerial phenomena

Overnight Wilkinson and MacAndrew had fallen into violent argument on the exact motives of their principal's rash act

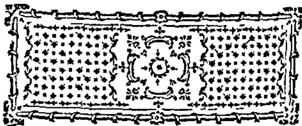
"The man was certainly a poor, cowardly body, but so far as his science went he was *no* impostor," said MacAndrew, "and I'm prepared to give that proposition a very practical demonstration, Mr Wilkinson, so soon

as we've got the place a little more to ourselves For I've no faith in all this publicity for experimental trials"

And to that end, while all the world was reading of the certain failure of the new flying machine, MacAndrew was soaring and curvetting with great amplitude and dignity over the Epsom and Wimbledon divisions, and Banghurst, restored once more to hope and energy,

be lroom window—equipped, among other things, with a film camera that was subsequently discovered to be jammed

And Filmer was lying on the billiard table in the green pavilion with a sheet about his body



STORY THE SECOND

The Magic Shop

I HAD seen the Magic Shop from afar several times, I had passed it once or twice, a shop window of alluring little objects, magic balls, magic hens, wonderful cones ventriloquist dolls, the material of the basket trick packs of cards that *looked* all right, and all that sort of thing, but never had I thought of going in until one day, almost without warning, Gip hauled me by my finger right up to the window, and so conducted himself that there was nothing for it but to take him in I had not thought the place was there, to tell the truth—a modest-sized frontage in Regent Street, between the picture shop and the place where the chicks run about just out of patent incubators—but there it was sure enough I had fancied it was down nearer the Circus or round the corner in Oxford Street, or even in Holborn, always over the way and a little inaccessible it had been, with something of the mirage in its position, but

here it was now quite indisputably, and the fat end of Gip's pointing finger made a noise upon the glass

'If I was rich,' said Gip, dabbing a finger at the Disappearing Egg, "I'd buy myself that And that' —which was The Crying Baby, Very Human—"and that which was a mystery, and called, so a neat card asserted "Buy One and Astonish Your Friends"

'Anything" said Gip, "will disappear under one of those cones I have read about it in a book

"And there, dadda, is the Vanishing Halfpenny—only they ve put it this way up so's we can't see how it's done '

Gip dear boy, inherits his mother's breeding and he did not propose to enter the shop or worry in any way, only you know, quite unconsciously he lugged my finger doorward and he made his interest clear

That" he said, and pointed to the Magic Bottle

'If you had that?" I said, at which promising inquiry he looked up with a sudden radiance

I could show it to Jessie" he said, thoughtful as ever of others

"It s less than a hundred days to your birthday, Gibbles ' I said and laid my hand on the door handle

Gip made no answer but his grip tightened on my finger, and so we came into the shop

It was no common shop this it was a magic shop, and all the prancing precedence Gip would have taken in the matter of mere toys was wanting He left the burthen of the conversation to me

It was a little, narrow shop, not very well lit, and the door bell pinged again with a plaintive note as we closed it behind us For a moment or so we were alone and could glance about us There was a tiger in *papier mache* on the glass case that covered the low counter—a grave kind eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner, there were several crystal spheres, a china hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fish bowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic hat that

shamelessly displayed its springs On the floor were magic mirrors, one to draw you out long and thin, one to swell your head and vanish your legs, and one to make you short and fat like a draught, and while we were laughing at these the shopman, as I suppose, came in

At any rate, there he was behind the counter—a curious, sallow, dark man, with one ear larger than the other and a chin like the toe cap of a boot

"What can we have the pleasure?" he said, spreading his long, magic fingers on the glass case, and so with a start we were aware of him

"I want," I said, "to buy my little boy a few simple tricks

"Legerdemain?" he asked "Mechanical? Domestic?"

"Anything amusing?" said I

"Um!" said the shopman, and scratched his head for a moment as if thinking Then, quite distinctly, he drew from his head a glass ball "Something in this way?" he said, and held it out

The action was unexpected I had seen the trick done at entertainments endless times before—it's part of the common stock of conjurers—but I had not expected it here "That's good," I said, with a laugh

"Isn't it?" said the shopman

Gip stretched out his disengaged hand to take this object and found merely a blank palm

"It's in your pocket," said the shopman, and there it was!

"How much will that be?" I asked

"We make no charge for glass balls," said the shopman, politely "We get them"—he picked one out of his elbow as he spoke—"free" He produced another from the back of his neck, and laid it beside its predecessor on the counter Gip regarded his glass ball sagely, then directed a look of inquiry at the two on the counter, and finally brought his round eyed scrutiny to the shopman, who smiled "You may have those too,"

said the shopman, "and if you *don't* mind, one from my mouth— *So!*"

Gip counselled me mutely for a moment, and then in a profound silence put away the four balls, resumed my reassuring finger, and nerved himself for the next event

"We get all our smaller tricks in that way," the shopman remarked

I laughed in the manner of one who subscribes to a jest "Instead of going to the wholesale shop," I said "Of course, it's cheaper"

"In a way," the shopman said "Though we pay in the end But not so heavily—as people suppose Our larger tricks, and our daily provisions and all the other things we want, we get out of that hat And you know, sir, if you'll excuse my saying it, there *isn't* a wholesale shop, not for Genuine Magic goods, sir I don't know if you noticed our inscription—the Genuine Magic shop" He drew a business card from his cheek and handed it to me. "Genuine," he said, with his finger on the word, and added, "There is absolutely no deception, sir"

He seemed to be carrying out the joke pretty thoroughly, I thought

He turned to Gip with a smile of remarkable affability. "You, you know, are the Right Sort of Boy"

I was surprised at his knowing that, because, in the interests of discipline, we keep it rather a secret even at home, but Gip received it in unflinching silence, keeping a steadfast eye on him

"It's only the Right Sort of Boy gets through that doorway"

[illegible]

a go in there [illegible] and then the accents of a down trodden parent, urging consolations and propitiations "It's locked, Edward," he said

"But it isn't," said I

"It is, sir," said the shopman, "always—for that sort of child" and as he spoke we had a glimpse of the other youngster, a small, white face, pallid from sweet eating and over sapid food, and distorted by evil passions, a ruthless little egotist pawing at the enchanted pane "It's no good, sir," said the shopman as I moved with my natural helpfulness doorward, and presently the spoilt child was carried off howling

How do you manage that?" I said breathing more freely

'Magic!" said the shopman, with a careless wave of the hand and behold! sparks of coloured fire flew out of his fingers and vanished into the shadows of the shop

You were saying," he said, addressing himself to Gip 'before you came in, that you would like one of our 'Buy One and Astonish your Friends' boxes?'

Gip, after a gallant effort, said "Yes"

"It's in your pocket"

And leaning over the counter—he really had an extraordinarily long body—this amazing person produced the article in the customary conjurer's manner "Paper," he said, and took a sheet out of the empty hat with the springs, "string," and behold his mouth was a string box from which he drew an unending thread which when he had tied his parcel he bit off—and, it seemed to me, swallowed the ball of string And then he lit a candle at the nose of one of the ventriloquist's dummies, stuck one of his fingers (which had become sealing wax red) into the flame, and so sealed the parcel "Then there was the Disappearing Egg" he remarked, and produced one from within my coat breast and packed it, and also The Crying Baby, Very Human I handed each parcel to Gip as it was ready, and he clasped them to his chest

He said very little, but his eyes were eloquent the clutch of his arms was eloquent He was the play-

ground of unspeakable emotions These, you know, were *real* Magics

Then, with a start, I discovered something moving about in my hat—something soft and jumpy I whipped it off, and a ruffled pigeon—no doubt a confederate—dropped out and ran on the counter, and went, I fancy, into a cardboard box behind the *papier maché* tiger

"Tut, tut!" said the shopman, dexterously relieving me of my headdress "careless bird, and—as I live—nesting!"

He shook my hat, and shook out into his extended hand two or three eggs, a large marble, a watch, about half a dozen of the inevitable glass balls, and then crumpled, crinkled paper, more and more and more, talking all the time of the way in which people neglect to brush their hats *inside* as well as out, politely, of course, but with a certain personal application "All sorts of things accumulate, sir Not *you*, of course, in particular Nearly every customer Astonishing what they carry about with them "

The crumpled paper rose and billowed on the counter more and more and more, until he was nearly hidden from us, until he was altogether hidden, and still his voice went on and on "We none of us know what the fair semblance of a human being may conceal, Sir Are we all then no better than brushed exteriors, whited sepulchres——"

His voice stopped—exactly like when you hit a neighbour's gramophone with a well aimed brick, the same instant silence, and the rustle of the paper stopped and everything was still .

"Have you done with my hat?" I said, after an interval

There was no answer

I stared at Gip, and Gip stared at me, and there were our distortions in the magic mirrors, looking very rum and grave, and quiet

"I think we'll go now," I said "Will you tell me *how much* all this comes to? . . .

"I say," I said, on a rather louder note, "I want the bill and my hat, *please*"

It might have been a sniff from behind the paper pile

"Let's look behind the counter, Gip," I said "He's making fun of us"

I led Gip round the head wagging tiger, and what do you think there was behind the counter? No one *at all!* Only my hat on the floor, and a common conjurer lop eared white rabbit lost in meditation, and looking as stupid and crumpled as only a conjurers rabbit can do I resumed my hat, and the rabbit lolloped a lollop or so out of my way

"Dadda!" said Gip, in a guilty whisper

"What is it, Gip?" said I

"I *do* like this shop, dadda"

"So should I," I said to myself, "if the counter wouldn't suddenly extend itself to shut one off from the door" But I didn't call Gip's attention to that "Pussy!" he said, with a hand out to the rabbit as it came lolloping past us, "Pussy, do Gip a magic!" and his eyes followed it as it squeezed through a door *I had* certainly not remarked a moment before Then this door opened wider, and the man with one ear larger than the other appeared again He was smiling still, but his eye met mine with something between amusement and defiance "You'd like to see our show room, sir," he said, with an innocent suavity Gip tugged my finger forward I glanced at the counter and met the shopman's eye again I was *beginning to* think the magic just a little too genuine "We haven't *very* much time," I said But somehow we were inside the show room before I could finish that

"*All* goods of the same quality," said the shopman, rubbing his flexible hands together, "and that *is* the

Best Nothing in the place that isn't genuine Magic, and warranted thoroughly rum Excuse me, sir!"

I felt him pull at something that clung to my coat-sleeve, and then I saw he held a little, wriggling red demon by the tail—the little creature bit and fought and tried to get at his hand—and in a moment he tossed it carelessly behind a counter No doubt the thing was only an image of twisted indiarubber, but for the moment——! And his gesture was exactly that of a man who handles some petty biting bit of vermin I glanced at Gip, but Gip was looking at a magic rock ing horse I was glad he hadn't seen the thing "I say," I said in an undertone, and indicating Gip and the red demon with my eyes, "you haven't many things like *that* about, have you?"

"None of ours! Probably brought it with you," said the shopman—also in an undertone, and with a more dazzling smile than ever "Astonishing what people *will* carry about with them unawares!" And then to Gip, "Do you see anything you fancy here?"

There were many things that Gip fancied there

He turned to this astonishing tradesman with mingled confidence and respect "Is that a Magic Sword?" he said

"A Magic Toy Sword It neither bends, breaks, nor cuts the fingers It renders the bearer invincible in battle against anyone under eighteen Half a crown to seven and sixpence, according to size These panoplies on cards are for juvenile knights errant and very useful—shield of safety, sandals of swiftness, helmet of invisibility"

"Oh, dadda!" gasped Gip

I tried to find out what they cost, but the shopman did not heed me He had got Gip now he had got him away from my finger, he had embarked upon the exposition of all his confounded stock, and nothing was going to stop him Presently I saw with a qualm of distrust and something very like jealousy that Gip

had hold of this person's finger as usually he has hold of *mine* No doubt the fellow was interesting, I thought, and had an interestingly faked lot of stuff really *good* faked stuff, still——

I wandered after them, saying very little, but keeping an eye on this prestidigital fellow After all, Gip was enjoying it And no doubt when the time came to go we should be able to go *quite easily*

It was a long, rambling place, that show room, a gallery broken up by stands and stalls and pillars with archways leading off to other departments, in which the queerest looking assistants loafed and stared at one and *with* perplexing mirrors and curtains So perplexing indeed, were these that I was presently unable to make out the door by which we had come

The shopman showed Gip magic trains that ran without steam or clockwork, just as you set the signals and then some very, very valuable boxes of soldiers that all came alive directly you took off the lid and said—— I myself haven't a very quick ear and it was a tongue twisting sound, but Gip—he has his mother's ear—got it in no time "Bravo!" said the shopman putting the men back into the box unceremoniously and handing it to Gip "Now," said the shopman and in a moment Gip had made them all alive again

"You'll *take* that box?" asked the shopman

"We'll take that box,' said I, "unless you charge its full value In which case it would need a Trust Magnate——"

"*Dear heart! No!*" and the shopman swept the little men back again, shut the lid, waved the box in the air, and there it was in brown paper, tied up and —*with Gip's full name and address on the paper!*

The shopman laughed at my amazement

"This is the genuine magic," he said "The real thing"

"It's almost too genuine for my taste," I said again

After that he fell to showing Gip tricks, odd tricks, and still odder the way they were done He explained them, he turned them inside out, and there was the dear little chap nodding his busy bit of a head in the sagest manner

I did not attend as well as I might "Hey, presto!" said the Magic Shopman, and then would come the clear, small 'Hey, presto!" of the boy But I was distracted by other things It was being borne in upon me just how tremendously rum this place was, it was so to speak inundated by a sense of rumness There was something vaguely rum about the fixtures even about the ceiling about the floor about the casually distributed chairs I had a queer feeling that when ever I wasn't looking at them straight they went askew, and moved about and played a noiseless puss in the corner behind my back And the cornice had a ser pentine design with masks—masks altogether too ex pressive for proper plaster

Then abruptly my attention was caught by one of the odd looking assistants He was some way off and evidently unaware of my presence—I saw a sort of three-quarter length of him over a pile of toys and through an arch—and you know, he was leaning against a pillar in an idle sort of way doing the most horrid things with his features! The particular horrid thing he did was with his nose He did it just as though he was idle and wanted to amuse himself First of all it was a short, blobby nose and then sud denly he shot it out like a telescope, and then out it flew and became thinner and thinner until it was like a long, red flexible whip Like a thing in a night mare it was! He flourished it about and flung it forth as a fly fisher flings his line

My instant thought was that Gip mustn't see him I turned about, and there was Gip quite preoccupied with the shopman and thinking no evil They were whispering together and looking at me Gip was stand

ing on a stool, and the shopman was holding a sort of big drum in his hand

"Hide and seek, dadda!" cried Gip "You're He!"

And before I could do anything to prevent it, the shopman had clapped the big drum over him

I saw what was up directly "Take that off," I cried, "this instant? You'll frighten the boy Take it off!"

The shopman with the unequal ears did so without a word and held the big cylinder towards me to show its emptiness And the stool was vacant! In that instant my boy had utterly disappeared! .

You know, perhaps, that sinister something that comes like a hand out of the unseen and grips your heart about You know it takes your common self away and leaves you tense and deliberate, neither slow nor hasty, neither angry nor afraid So it was with me

I came up to this grinning shopman and kicked his stool aside

"Stop this folly!" I said "Where is my boy?"

"You see," he said, still displaying the drum's interior "there is no deception——"

I put out my hand to grip him, and he eluded me by a dexterous movement I snatched again, and he turned from me and pushed open a door to escape "Stop!" I said, and he laughed, receding I leapt after him—into utter darkness

Thud!

"Lor' bless my 'eart! I didn't see you coming, sir!"

I was in Regent Street, and I had collided with a decent looking working man, and a yard away, perhaps, and looking extremely perplexed with himself, was Gip There was some sort of apology, and then Gip had turned and come to me with a bright little smile, as though for a moment he had missed me

And he was carrying four parcels in his arm!

He secured immediate possession of my finger

For the second I was rather at a loss I stared round to see the door of the magic shop, and, behold, it was not there! There was no door, no shop, nothing, only the common pilaster between the shop where they sell pictures and the window with the chicks!

I did the only thing possible in that mental tumult, I walked straight to the kerbstone and held up my umbrella for a cab

"'Ansoms," said Gip, in a note of culminating exultation

I helped him in, recalled my address with an effort, and got in also Something unusual proclaimed itself in my tail-coat pocket and I felt and discovered a glass ball With a petulant expression I flung it into the street

Gip said nothing

For a space neither of us spoke

"Dadda!" said Gip, at last, "that *was* a proper shop!"

I came round with that to the problem of just how the whole thing had seemed to him He looked completely undamaged—so far, good, he was neither scared nor unhinged he was simply tremendously satisfied with the afternoon's entertainment, and there in his arms were the four parcels

Confound it! what could be in them?

"Um!" I said "Little boys can't go to shops like that every day"

He received this with his usual stoicism, and for a moment I was sorry I was his father and not his mother, and so couldn't suddenly there, *coram publico* in our hansom, kiss him After all, I thought, the thing wasn't so very bad

But it was only when we opened the parcels that I really began to be reassured Three of them contained boxes of soldiers, quite ordinary lead soldiers, but of so good a quality as to make Gip altogether forget that

westward the valley opened until a distant darkness under the sky told where the forests began But the three men looked neither east nor west, but only steadfastly across the valley.

The gaunt man with the scarred lip was the first to speak "Nowhere," he said, with a sigh of disappointment in his voice "But after all, they had a full day's start"

"They don't know we are after them," said the little man on the white horse

"*She* would know," said the leader bitterly, as if speaking to himself

"Even then they can't go fast They've got no beast but the mule, and all to day the girl's foot has been bleeding——"

The man with the silver bridle flashed a quick intensity of rage on him "Do you think I haven't seen that?" he snarled

"It helps, anyhow," whispered the little man to himself

The gaunt man with the scarred lip stared impassively "They can't be over the valley," he said. "If we ride hard——"

He glanced at the white horse and paused

"Curse all white horses!" said the man with the silver bridle, and turned to scan the beast his curse included

The little man looked down between the melancholy ears of his steed

"I did my best," he said

The two others stared again across the valley for a space The gaunt man passed the back of his hand across the scarred lip

"Come up!" said the man who owned the silver bridle, suddenly The little man started and jerked his rein, and the horse hoofs of the three made a multitudinous faint pattering upon the withered grass as they turned back towards the trail . . .

They rode cautiously down the long slope before them, and so came through a waste of prickly twisted bushes and strange dry shapes of horny branches that grew amongst the rocks, into the level below And there the trail grew faint, for the soil was scanty, and the only herbage was this scorched dead straw that lay upon the ground Still, by hard scanning, by leaning beside the horse's necks and pausing ever and again, even these white men could contrive to follow after their prey

There were trodden places, bent and broken blades of the coarse grass, and ever and again the sufficient intimation of a footmark And once the leader saw a brown smear of blood where the half-caste girl may have trod And at that under his breath he cursed her for a fool

The gaunt man checked his leader's tracking and the little man on the white horse rode behind a man lost in a dream They rode one after another, the man with the silver bridle led the way, and they spoke never a word After a time it came to the little man on the white horse that the world was very still He started out of his dream Besides the minute noises of their horses and equipment, the whole great valley kept the brooding quiet of a painted scene

Before him went his master and his fellow, each intently leaning forward to the left, each impassively moving with the paces of his horse, their shadows went before them—still, noiseless, tapering attendants, and nearer a crouched cool shape was his own He looked about him What was it had gone? Then he remembered the reverberation from the banks of the gorge and the perpetual accompaniment of shifting, jostling pebbles And, moreover——? There was no breeze That was it! What a vast, still place it was, a monotonous afternoon slumber And the sky open and blank, except for a sombre veil of haze that had gathered in the upper valley.

seemed to everyone, mad—blasphemous almost The little man, by way of comparison, reflected on the gaunt rider with the scarred lip, as stalwart as his master, as brave and, indeed, perhaps braver, and yet for him there was obedience, nothing but to give obedience duly and stoutly .

Certain sensations of the hands and knees called the little man back to more immediate things He became aware of something He rode up beside his gaunt fellow "Do you notice the horses?" he said in an undertone

The gaunt face looked interrogation

"They don't like this wind' said the little man, and dropped behind as the man with the silver bridle turned upon him

"It's all right," said the gaunt faced man

They rode on again for a space in silence The foremost two rode downcast upon the trail, the hind most man watched the haze that crept down the vast ness of the valley, nearer and nearer, and noted how the wind grew in strength moment by moment. Far away on the left he saw a line of dark bulks—wild hog perhaps, galloping down the valley, but of that he said nothing nor did he remark again upon the uneasiness of the horses

And then he saw first one and then a second great white ball, a great shining white ball like a gigantic head of thistledown, that drove before the wind athwart the path These balls soared high in the air, and dropped and rose again and caught for a moment, and hurried on and passed, but at the sight of them the rest lessness of the horses increased

Then presently he saw that more of these drifting globes—and then soon very many more—were hurrying towards him down the valley

They became aware of a squealing Athwart the path a huge boar rushed, turning his head but for one instant to glance at them, and then hurling on down the valley

again And at that, all three stopped and sat in their saddles, staring into the thickening haze that was coming upon them

"If it were not for this thistledown——" began the leader

But now a big globe came drifting past within a score of yards of them It was really not an even sphere at all, but a vast, soft, ragged, filmy thing, a sheet gathered by the corners, an ærial jelly fish, as it were, but rolling over and over as it advanced, and trailing long, cobwebby threads and streamers that floated in its wake

"It isn't thistledown," said the little man

"I don't like the stuff," said the gaunt man

And they looked at one another

"Curse it!" cried the leader "The air's full of it up there If it keeps on at this pace long, it will stop us altogether"

An instinctive feeling, such as lines out a herd of deer at the approach of some ambiguous thing, prompted them to turn their horses to the wind, ride forward for a few paces, and stare at that advancing multitude of floating masses They came on before the wind with a sort of smooth swiftness rising and falling noiselessly, sinking to earth rebounding high, soaring—all with a perfect unanimity, with a still, deliberate assurance

Right and left of the horsemen the pioneers of this strange army passed At one that rolled along the ground breaking shapelessly and trailing out reluctantly into long grappling ribbons and bands, all three horses began to shy and dance The master was seized with a sudden, unreasonable impatience He cursed the drifting globes roundly "Get on!" he cried, "get on! What do these things matter? How *can* they matter? Back to the trail!" He fell swearing at his horse and sawed the bit across its mouth

He shouted aloud with rage "I will follow that trail, I tell yo ," he cried "Where is the trail?"

He gripped the bridle of his prancing horse and

searched amidst the grass A long and clinging thread fell across his face a grey streamer dropped about his bridle arm some big, active thing with many legs ran down the back of his head He looked up to discover one of those grey masses anchored as it were above him by these things and flapping out ends as a sail flaps when a boat comes about—but noiselessly

He had an impression of many eyes of a dense crew of squat bodies of long, many jointed limbs hauling at their mooring ropes to bring the thing down upon him For a space he stared up reining in his prancing horse with the instinct born of years of horsemanship Then the flat of a sword smote his back, and a blade flashed overhead and cut the drifting balloon of spider web free and the whole mass lifted softly and drove clear and away

Spiders!" cried the voice of the gaunt man "The things are full of big spiders! Look, my lord!"

The man with the silver bridle still followed the mass that drove away

Look my lord!"

The master found himself staring down at a red smashed thing on the ground that, in spite of partial obliteration, could still wriggle unavailing legs Then when the gaunt man pointed to another mass that bore down upon them, he drew his sword hastily Up the valley now it was like a fog bank torn to rags He tried to grasp the situation

"Ride for it!" the little man was shouting "Ride for it down the valley"

What happened then was like the confusion of a battle The man with the silver bridle saw the little man go past him slashing furiously at imaginary cob webs, saw him cannon into the horse of the gaunt man and hurl it and its rider to earth His own horse went a dozen paces before he could rein it in Then he looked up to avoid imaginary dangers, and then back again to see a horse rolling on the ground the gaunt

man standing and slashing over it at a rent and fluttering mass of grey that streamed and wrapped about them both And thick and fast as thistledown on waste land on a windy day in July, the cobweb masses were coming on

The little man had dismounted, but he dared not release his horse He was endeavouring to lug the struggling brute back with the strength of one arm, while with the other he slashed aimlessly The tentacles of a second grey mass had entangled themselves with the struggle, and this second grey mass came to its moorings, and slowly sank

The master set his teeth, gripped his bridle, lowered his head, and spurred his horse forward The horse on the ground rolled over, there was blood and moving shapes upon the flanks, and the gaunt man suddenly leaving it, ran forward towards his master, perhaps ten paces His legs were swathed and encumbered with grey, he made ineffectual movements with his sword Grey streamers waved from him, there was a thin veil of grey across his face With his left hand he beat at something on his body, and suddenly he stumbled and fell He struggled to rise, and fell again, and suddenly, horribly, began to howl, "Oh—ohoo, ohooh!"

The master could see the great spiders upon him, and others upon the ground

As he strove to force his horse nearer to this gesticulating screaming grey object that struggled up and down, there came a clatter of hoofs, and the little man, in act of mounting, swordless, balanced on his belly

To the day of his death he never knew just how the event of that moment happened Did he, indeed, turn his horse or did it really of its own accord stampede

after its fellow? Suffice it that in another second he was galloping full tilt down the valley with his sword whirling furiously overhead And all about him on the quickening breeze, the spiders' air ships, their air bundles and air sheets, seemed to him to hurry in a conscious pursuit

Clatter, clatter, thud, thud—the man with the silver bridle rode, heedless of his direction, with his fearful face looking up now right, now left, and his sword arm ready to slash And a few hundred yards ahead of him, with a tail of torn cobweb trailing behind him rode the little man on the white horse, still but imperfectly in the saddle The reeds bent before them, the wind blew fresh and strong, over his shoulder the master could see the webs hurrying to overtake

He was so intent to escape the spiders' webs that only as his horse gathered together for a leap did he realise the ravine ahead And then he realised it only to misunderstand and interfere He was leaning forward on his horse's neck and sat up and back all too late

But if in his excitement he had failed to leap, at any rate he had not forgotten how to fall He was horseman again in mid air He came off clear with a mere bruise upon his shoulder, and his horse rolled, kicking spasmodic legs, and lay still But the master's sword drove its point into the hard soil, and snapped clean across, as though Chance refused him any longer as her Knight, and the splintered end missed his face by an inch or so

He was on his feet in a moment, breathlessly scanning the onrushing spider webs For a moment he was minded to run, and then thought of the ravine, and turned back He ran aside once to dodge one drifting terror, and then he was swiftly clambering down the precipitous sides, and out of the touch of the gale

There under the lee of the dry torrent's steeper banks he might crouch, and watch these strange, grey masses pass and pass in safety till the wind fell, and it became

possible to escape And there for a long time he crouched, watching the strange, grey, ragged masses trail their streamers across his narrowed sky

Once a stray spider fell into the ravine close beside him—a full foot it measured from leg to leg, and its body was half a man's hand—and after he had watched its monstrous alacrity of search and escape for a little while, and tempted it to bite his broken sword, he lifted up his iron heeled boot and smashed it into a pulp He swore as he did so, and for a time sought up and down for another

Then presently, when he was surer these spider swarms could not drop into the ravine, he found a place where he could sit down, and sat and fell into deep thought and began after his manner to gnaw his knuckles and bite his nails And from this he was moved by the coming of the man with the white horse

He heard him long before he saw him, as a clattering of hoofs, stumbling footsteps, and a reassuring voice [illegible]

face to face with his seated master The latter winced a little under his dependant's eye "Well?" he said at last, with no pretence of authority

"You left him?"

"My horse bolted"

"I know So did mine"

He laughed at his master mirthlessly

"I say my horse bolted," said the man who once had a silver studded bridle

"Cowards both," said the little man

[illegible]

"A coward possibly There is a limit beyond which every man must fear That I have learnt at last But not like yourself That is where the difference comes in

"I never could have dreamt you would have left him He saved your life two minutes before Why are you our lord?"

The master gnawed his knuckles again, and his countenance was dark

"No man calls me a coward," he said "No A broken sword is better than none One spavined white horse cannot be expected to carry two men a four days journey I hate white horses, but this time it cannot be helped You begin to understand me? I perceive that you are minded, on the strength of what you have seen and fancy, to taint my reputation It is men of your sort who unmake kings Besides which— I never liked you "

"My lord!" said the little man

"No said the master "*No!*"

He stood up sharply as the little man moved For a minute perhaps they faced one another Overhead the spiders' balls went driving There was a quick movement among the pebbles, a running of feet, a cry of despair, a gasp and a blow •

Towards nightfall the wind fell The sun set in a calm serenity, and the man who had once possessed the silver bridle came at last very cautiously and by an easy slope out of the ravine again, but now he led the white horse that once belonged to the little man He would have gone back to his horse to get his silver mounted bridle again, but he feared night and a quickening breeze might still find him in the valley, and besides he disliked greatly to think he might discover his horse all swathed in cobwebs and perhaps unpleasantly eaten

And as he thought of those cobwebs and of all the dangers he had been through and the manner in which he had been preserved that day, his hand sought a little

reliquary that hung about his neck, and he clasped it for a moment with heartfelt gratitude As he did so his eyes went across the valley

"I was hot with passion," he said, "and now she has met her reward They also, no doubt——"

And behold! Far away out of the wooded slopes across the valley, but in the clearness of the sunset distinct and unmistakable, he saw a little spire of smoke

At that his expression of serene resignation changed to an amazed anger Smoke? He turned the head of the white horse about, and hesitated And as he did so a little rustle of air went through the grass about him Far away upon some reeds swayed a tattered sheet of grey He looked at the cobwebs, he looked at the smoke

"Perhaps, after all, it is not them," he said at last

But he knew better

After he had stared at the smoke for some time, he mounted the white horse

As he rode, he picked his way amidst stranded masses of web For some reason there were many dead spiders on the ground, and those that lived feasted guiltily on their fellows At the sound of his horse's hoofs they fled

Their time had passed From the ground, without either a wind to carry them or a winding sheet ready these things, for all their poison, could do him no evil

He flicked with his belt at those he fancied came too near Once, where a number ran together over a bare place he was minded to dismount and trample them with his boots, but this impulse he overcame Ever and again he turned in his saddle, and looked back at the smoke

"Spiders," he muttered over and over again "Spiders! Well, well . . . The next time I must spin a web"

STORY THE FOURTH

The Truth about Pyecraft

HE sits not a dozen yards away If I glance over my shoulder I can see him And if I catch his eye—and usually I catch his eye—it meets me with an expression——

It is mainly an imploring look—and yet with suspicion in it

Confound his suspicion! If I wanted to tell on *him* I should have told long ago I don't tell and I don't tell, and he ought to feel at his ease As if anything so gross and fat as he could feel at ease! Who would believe me if I did tell?

Poor old Pyecraft! Great, uneasy jelly of substance! The fattest clubman in London

He sits at one of the little club tables in the huge bay by the fire, stuffing What is he stuff'ng? I glance judiciously and catch him biting at a round of hot buttered teacake, with his eyes on me Confound him!—with his eyes on me!

That settles it, Pyecraft! Since you *will* be abject since you *will* behave as though I was not a man of

honour, here, right under your embedded eyes, I write the thing down—the plain truth about Pyecraft The

And, besides, why does he keep on eternally eating?

Well, here goes for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

Pyecraft—— I made the acquaintance of Pyecraft in this very smoking room I was a young, nervous new member, and he saw it. I was sitting all alone, wishing I knew more of the members, and suddenly he *came a great rolling front of chins and abdomina* towards me, and grunted and sat down in a chair close by me and wheezed for a space, and scraped for a space with a match and lit a cigar, and then addressed me I forget what he said—something about the matches not lighting properly, and afterwards as he talked he kept stopping the waiters one by one as they went by, and telling them about the matches in that thin, fluty voice he has But, anyhow, it was in some such way we began our talking

He talked about various things and came round to games And thence to my figure and complexion "You ought to be a good cricketer, he said I suppose I am slender, slender to what some people would call lean, and I suppose I am rather dark, still—— I am not ashamed of having a Hindu great grandmother, but, for all that I don t want casual strangers to see through me at a glance to *her* So that I was set against Pyecraft from the beginning

But he only talked about me in order to get to himself

"I expect" he said "you take no more exercise than I do and probably you eat no less' (Like all excessively obese people he fancied he ate nothing) "Yet"—and he smiled an oblique smile—"*we differ*"

And then he began to talk about his fatness and his fatness all he did for his fatness and all he was going to do for his fatness, what people had advised him to do for his fatness and what he had heard of people doing for fatness similar to his "*A priori*" he said "one would think a question of nutrition could be answered by dietary and a question of assimilation by drugs It was stifling It was dumpling talk It made me feel swelled to hear him

One stands that sort of thing once in a way at a club but a time came when I fancied I was standing too much He took to me altogether too conspicuously I could never go into the smoking room but he would come wallowing towards me, and sometimes he came and gormandised round and about me while I had my lunch He seemed at times almost to be clinging to me He was a bore, but not so fearful a bore as to be limited to me and from the first there was something in his manner—almost as though he knew, almost as though he penetrated to the fact that I *might*—that there was a remote, exceptional chance in me that no one else presented

"I'd give anything to get it down," he would say—"anything,' and peer at me over his vast cheeks and pant

Poor old Pyecraft! He has just gonged, no doubt to order another buttered teacake!

He came to the actual thing one day "Our Pharmacopœia" he said, "our Western Pharmacopœia, is anything but the last word of medical science In the East I've been told——"

He stopped and stared at me It was like being at an aquarium

I was quite suddenly angry with him "Look here,' I said, "who told you about my great grandmother's recipes?"

"Well," he fenced

"Every time we've met for a week" I said—"and

we've met pretty often—you've given me a broad hint or so about that little secret of mine"

"Well," he said, "now the cat's out of the bag, I'll admit, yes, it is so I had it——"

"From Pattison?"

"Indirectly," he said, which I believe was lying, "yes"

"Pattison" I said, "took that stuff at his own risk"

He pursed his mouth and bowed

"My great grandmother's recipes," I said, "are queer things to handle My father was near making me promise——"

"He didn't?"

"No But he warned me He himself used one—once"

"Ah! But do you think——? Suppose—suppose there did happen to be one——"

"The things are curious documents' I said "Even the smell of em No!"

But after going so far Pyecraft was resolved I should go farther I was always a little afraid if I tried his patience too much he would fall on me suddenly and smother me I own I was weak But I was also annoyed with Pyecraft I had got to that state of feeling for him that disposed me to say, "Well, *take* the risk!" The little affair of Pattison to which I have alluded was a different matter altogether What it was doesn't concern us now, but I knew, anyhow, that the particular recipe I used then was safe The rest I didn't know so much about, and on the whole, I was inclined to doubt their safety pretty completely

Yet even if Pyecraft got poisoned——

I must confess the poisoning of Pyecraft struck me as an immense undertaking

That evening I took that queer odd scented sandal wood box out of my safe and turned the rustling skins over The gentleman who wrote the recipes for my

great grandmother evidently had a weakness for skins of a miscellaneous origin, and his handwriting was cramped to the last degree Some of the things are quite unreadable to me—though my family, with its Indian Civil Service associations, has kept up a knowledge of Hindustani from generation to generation—and none are absolutely plain sailing But I found the one that I knew was there soon enough, and sat on the floor by my safe for some time looking at it

"Look here," said I to Pyecraft next day, and snatched the slip away from his eager grasp

"So far as I can make it out, this is a recipe for Loss of Weight ("Ah!" said Pyecraft) I'm not absolutely sure, but I think it's that And if you take my advice you'll leave it alone Because, you know—I blacken my blood in your interest, Pyecraft—my ancestors on that side were, so far as I can gather, a jolly queer lot See?"

"Let me try it," said Pyecraft

I leant back in my chair My imagination made one mighty effort and fell flat within me "What in Heaven's name, Pyecraft," I asked, "do you think you'll look like when you get thin?"

He was impervious to reason I made him promise never to say a word to me about his disgusting *fatness* again whatever happened—never, and then I *handed* him that little piece of skin

"It's nasty stuff," I said

"No matter," he said, and took it

He goggled at it "But—but——" he said

He had just discovered that it wasn't English.

"To the best of my ability," I said, "I will do you a translation"

I did my best After that we didn't speak for a fortnight Whenever he approached me I frowned and motioned him away, and he respected our compact but at the end of the fortnight he was as fat as ever And then he got a word in

"I must speak," he said "It isn't fair There's something wrong It's done me no good You're not doing your great grandmother justice"

"Where's the recipe?"

He produced it gingerly from his pocket book

I ran my eye over the items "Was the egg addled?" I asked

"No Ought it to have been?"

"That," I said, "goes wi hout saying in all my poor dear great g andmother's recipes When condition or quality is not spec fied you must get the worst She was drastic or nothing And there's one or two possible alternatives to some of these other things You got *fresh* rattlesnake venom?"

"I got a rattlesnake from Jamrach's It cost—it cost——"

"That's your affair, anyhow This last item——"

"I know a man who——"

"Yes H'm Well, I ll write the alternatives down So far as I know the language, the spelling of this recipe is particularly atrocious By the bye, dog here probably means pariah dog"

For a month after that I saw Pyecraft constantly at the club and as fat and anxious as ever He kept our treaty, but at times he broke the spirit of it by shaking his head despondently Then one day in the cloak room he said, "Your great grandmother——"

"Not a word against her," I said, and he held his peace

I could have fancied he had desisted, and I saw him one day talking to three new members about his fatness as though he was in search of other recipes And then quite unexpectedly his telegram came

"Mr Formalyn!" bawled a page boy under my nose and I took the telegram and opened it at once

"*For Heaven's sake come —Pyecraft*"

"H'm," said I, and to tell the truth I was so pleased at the rehabilitation of my great grandmother's reputa

tion 'is evidently promised that I made a most excellent lunch

I got Pyecraft's address from the hall porter Pyecraft inhabited the upper half of a house in Bloomsbury, and I went there so soon as I had done my coffee and Tripp stine I did not wait to finish my cigar

"Mr Pyecraft?" said I, at the front door

They believed he was ill, he hadn't been out for two days

He expects me," said I and they sent me up

I rang the bell at the lattice door upon the landing

"He shouldn't have tried it, anyhow," I said to myself "A man who eats like a pig ought to look like a pig"

An obviously worthy woman, with an anxious face and a carelessly placed cap, came and surveyed me through the lattice

I gave my name and she opened his door for me in a dubious fashion

"Well?" said I, as we stood together inside Pyecraft's piece of the landing

"'E said you was to come in if you came,' she said, and regarded me, making no motion to show me anywhere And then, confidentially, "'E's locked in, sir"

"Locked in?"

"Locked himself in yesterday morning and 'asn't let anyone in since, sir And ever and again *swearing* Oh my!"

I stared at the door she indicated by her glances "In there?" I said

"Yes sir"

"What's up?"

She shook her head sadly "'E keeps on calling for vittles sir '*Eavy* vittles 'e wants I get 'im what I can Pork 'e's 'ad, soot puddin', sossiges noo bread Everythink like that Left outside if you please, and me go away 'E's eatin' sir, somethink *awful*"

There came a piping bawl from inside the door "That Formalyn?"

"That you, Pyecraft I shouted, and went and banged the door

"Tell her to *go away*"

I did

[illegible]

But for a long time the door didn't open

I heard the key turn Then Pyecraft's voice said "Come in"

I turned the handle and opened the door Naturally I expected to see Pyecraft

Well, you know he wasn't there!

I never had such a shock in my life There was his sitting room in a state of untidy disorder, plates and dishes among the books and writing things, and several chairs overturned, but Pyecraft——

"It's all right, o' man, shut the door," he said, and then I discovered him

There he was right up close to the cornice in the corner by the door as though someone had glued him to the ceiling His face was anxious and angry He panted and gesticulated "Shut the door," he said "*If that woman gets hold of it*——"

I shut the door, and went and stood away from him and stared

"If anything gives way and you tumble down," I said, "you'll break your neck, Pyecraft"

"I wish I could," he wheezed

"A man of your age and weight getting up to kiddish gymnastics——"

"Don't," he said, and looked agonized "*Your* damned great grandmother——"

"Be careful," I warned him

"I'll tell you," he said, and gesticulated

"How the deuce," said I, "are you holding on up here?"

And then abruptly I realized that he was not holding on at all that he was floating up there—just as a gas filled bladder might have floated in the same position He began a struggle to thrust himself away from the ceiling and to clamber down the wall to me It's that prescription," he panted, as he did so "Your great gran——"

No!" I cried.

He took hold of a framed engraving rather carelessly as he spoke and it gave way, and he flew back to the ceiling again, while the picture smashed on to the sofa Bump he went against the ceiling, and I knew then why he was all over white on the more salient curves and angles of his person He tried again more carefully, coming down by way of the mantel

It was really a most extraordinary spectacle that great, fat apoplectic looking man upside down and trying to get from the ceiling to the floor "That prescription,' he said "Too successful"

' How?"

"Loss of weight—almost complete"

And then, of course, I understood

"By Jove, Pyecraft," said I, "what you wanted was a cure for fatness! But you always called it weight You would call it weight"

Somehow I was extremely delighted I quite like Pyecraft for the time "Let me help you!' I said and took his hand and pulled him down He kicked about, trying to get foothold somewhere It was very like holding a flag on a windy day

"That table," he said, pointing, "is solid mahogany and very heavy If you can put me under that——"

I did, and there he wallowed about like a captive balloon while I stood on his hearthrug and talked to him

I lit a cigar "Tell me," I said, "what happened?"

"I took it," he said

"How did it taste?"

"Oh, *beastly!*"

I should fancy they all did Whether one regards the ingredients or the probable compound or the pos sible results, almost all my great grandmother's remedies *appear to me at least to be extraordinarily uninviting* For my own part——

"I took a little sip first"

"Yes?"

"And as I felt lighter and better after an hour, I decided to take the draught"

"My dear Pyecraft!"

"I held my nose,' he explained "And then I kept on getting lighter and lighter—and helpless, you know"

He gave way suddenly to a burst of passion "What the goodness am I to *do?*" he said

"There's one thing pretty evident," I said, "that you mustn't do If you go out of doors you'll go up and up" I waved an arm upward "They'd have to send Santos Dumont after you to bring you down again"

"I suppose it will wear off?"

I shook my head "I don't think you can count on that," I said

And then there was another burst of passion, and he kicked out at adjacent chairs and banged the floor He behaved just as I should have expected a great, fat, self indulgent man to behave under trying circumstances—that is to say, very badly He spoke of me and of my great grandmother with an utter want of discretion

"I never asked you to take the stuff," I said

And generously disregarding the insults he was putting upon me, I sat down in his armchair and began to talk to him in a sober, friendly fashion

I pointed out to him that this was a trouble he had

brought upon himself, and that it had almost an air of poetical justice He had eaten too much This he disputed, and for a time we argued the point

He became noisy and violent, so I desisted from this aspect of his lesson "And then," said I, "you committed the sin of euphuism You called it, not Fat which is just and inglorious, but Weight You——"

He interrupted to say that he recognised all that What was he to *do?*

I suggested he should adapt himself to his new conditions So we came to the really sensible part of the business I suggested that it would not be difficult for him to learn to walk about on the ceiling with his hands——

"I can't sleep," he said

But that was no great difficulty It was quite possible I pointed out, to make a shake up under a wire mattress fasten the under things on with tapes, and have a blanket, sheet, and coverlet to button at the side He would have to confide in his housekeeper, I said and after some squabbling he agreed to that (Afterwards it was quite delightful to see the beautifully matter-of fact way with which the good lady took all these amazing inversions) He could have a library ladder in his room, and all his meals could be laid on the top of his bookcase We also hit on an ingenious device by which he could get to the floor whenever he wanted, which was simply to put the *British Encyclopædia* (tenth edition) on the top of his open shelves He just pulled out a couple of volumes and held on and down he came And we agreed there must be iron staples along the skirting, so that he could cling to those whenever he wanted to get about the room on the lower level

As we got on with the thing I found myself almost keenly interested It was I who called in the housekeeper and broke matters to her, and it was I chiefly who fixed up the inverted bed In fact, I spent two

whole days at his flat I am a handy, interfering sort of man with a screwdriver and I made all sorts of ingenious adaptations for him—ran a wire to bring his bells within *reach*, turned all *his electric* lights *up* instead of down, and so on The whole affair was extremely curious and interesting to me, and it was delightful to think of Pyecraft like some great, fat blow fly, crawling about on his ceiling and clambering round the lintel of his doors from one room to another and never, never, never coming to the club any more .

Then, you know, my fatal ingenuity got the better of me I was sitting by his fire drinking his whisky, and he was up in his favourite corner by the cornice, tacking a Turkey carpet to the ceiling when the idea struck me "By Jove, Pyecraft!" I said, "all this is totally unnecessary"

And before I could calculate the complete consequences of my notion I blurted it out "Lead under clothing," said I, and the mischief was done

Pyecraft received the thing almost in tears "To be right ways up again——" he said

I gave him the whole secret before I saw where it would take me "Buy sheet lead," I said, "stamp it *into discs Sew 'em all over your underclothes until* you have enough Have lead soled boots, carry a bag of solid lead and the thing is done! Instead of being a prisoner here you may go abroad again, Pyecraft, you may travel——"

A still happier idea came to me "You need never fear a shipwreck All you need do is just slip off some or all of your clothes, take the necessary amount of luggage in your hand, and float up in the air——"

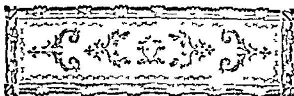
In his emotion he dropped the tack hammer within an ace of my head "By Jove!" he said, "I shall be able to come back to the club again"

The thing pulled me up short "By Jove!" I said, faintly "Yes Of course—you will"

He did He does There he sits behind me now stuffing—as I live!—a third go of buttered tea-cake. And no one in the whole world knows—except his housekeeper and me—that he weighs practically nothing, that he is a mere boring mass of assimilatory matter, mere clouds in clothing, *niente, nefas* the most inconsiderable of men There he sits watching until I have done this writing Then, if he can, he will waylay me He will come billowing up to me

He will tell me over again all about it, how it feels how it doesn't feel, how he sometimes hopes it is passing off a little And always somewhere in that fat abundant discourse he will say, "The secret's keeping, eh? If anyone knew of it—I should be so ashamed Makes a fellow look such a fool, you know Crawling about on a ceiling and all that "

And now to elude Pyecraft, occupying, as he does an admirable strategic position between me and the door



STORY THE FIFTH

Mr Skelmersdale in Fairyland

THERE'S a man in that shop," said the Doctor, "who has been in Fairyland."

"Nonsense!" I said, and stared back at the shop. It was the usual village shop, post office, telegraph wire on its brow, zinc pans and brushes outside, boots, shirtings, and potted meats in the window. "Tell me about it," I said, after a pause.

"*I* don't know," said the Doctor. "He's an ordinary sort of lout—Skelmersdale is his name. But everybody about here believes it like Bible truth."

I reverted presently to the topic.

"I know nothing about it," said the Doctor, "and I don't *want* to know. I attended him for a broken finger—Married and Single cricket match—and that's when I struck the nonsense. That's all. But it shows you the sort of stuff I have to deal with, anyhow, eh? Nice to get modern sanitary ideas into a people like this!"

"Very," I said in a mildly sympathetic tone, and he went on to tell me about that business of the Bonham drain. Things of that kind, I observe, are apt to weigh on the minds of Medical Officers of Health. I was as

sympathetic as I knew how, and when he called the Bignham people "asses," I said they were "thundering asses," but even that did not allay him

Afterwards, later in the summer, an urgent desire to seclude myself, while finishing my chapter on Spiritual Pathology—it was really, I believe, stiffer to write than it is to read—took me to Bignor I lodged at a farmhouse, and presently found myself outside that little general shop again, in search of tobacco "Skelmersdale" said I to myself at the sight of it, and went in

I was served by a short, but shapely, young man, with a fair downy complexion, good, small teeth, blue eyes and a languid manner I scrutinised him curiously Except for a touch of melancholy in his expression, he was nothing out of the common He was in the shirt sleeves and tucked up apron of his trade and a pencil was thrust behind his inoffensive ear Athwart his black waistcoat was a gold chain, from which dangled a bent guinea

"Nothing more to day, sir?" he inquired He leant forward over my bill as he spoke

"Are you Mr Skelmersdale?" said I

"I am, sir," he said, without looking up

"Is it true that you have been in Fairyland?"

He looked up at me for a moment with wrinkled brows, with an aggrieved, exasperated face "O SHUT it!" he said, and after a moment of hostility, eye to eye, he went on adding up my bill "Four, six and a half," he said after a pause "Thank you, sir"

So unpropitiously, my acquaintance with Mr Skelmersdale began

Well, I got from that to confidence—through a series of toilsome efforts I picked him up again in the Village Room, where of a night I went to play billiards after my supper, and mitigate the extreme seclusion from my kind that was so helpful to work during the day I contrived to play with him and afterwards to talk with him I found the one subject to avoid was Fairy

land On everything else he was open and amiable in a commonplace sort of way but on that he had been worried—it was a manifest taboo Only once in the room did I hear the slightest allusion to his experience in his presence and that was by a cross grained farm hand who was losing to him Skelmersdale had just made a break into double figures which, by the Bignor standards was uncommonly good play "Steady on," said his adversary "None of your fairy flukes!"

Skelmersdale stared at him for a moment, cue in hand then flung it down and walked out of the room

"Why can't you leave 'im alone?" said a respectable elder who had been enjoying the game, and in the general murmur of disapproval the grin of satisfied wit faded from the ploughboy's face

I scented my opportunity "What's this joke," said I, "about Fairyland?"

"'Taint no joke about Fairyland, not to young Skelmersdale," said the respectable elder, drinking

A little man with rosy cheeks was more communicative "They *do* say sir" he said "that they took him into Aldington Knoll an' kep' him there a matter of three weeks"

And with that the gathering was well under way Once one sheep had started others were ready enough to follow, and in a little time I had at least the general aspect of the Skelmersdale affair Formerly, before he came to Bignor he had been in that very similar little shop at Aldington Corner and there whatever it was did happen had taken place The story was clear that he had stayed out late one night on the Knoll and vanished for three weeks from the sight of men, and had returned with "his cuffs as clean as when he went," and his pockets full of dust and ashes He returned in a state of moody wretchedness that only slowly passed away and for many days he would give no account of where it was he had been The girl he was engaged to at Clapton Hill tried to get it out of him and threw

him over partly because he refused, and partly because as she said, he fairly gave her the "'ump" And then when, some time after, he let out to someone carelessly that he had been in Fairyland and wanted to go back and when the thing spread and the simple badinage of the countryside came into play, he threw up his situation abruptly, and came to Bignor to get out of the fuss But as to what had happened in Fairyland none of these people knew There the gathering in the Village Room went to pieces like a pack at fault One said this and another said that

Their air in dealing with this marvel was ostensibly critical and sceptical, but I could see a considerable amount of belief showing through their guarded qualifications I took a line of intelligent interest, tinged with a reasonable doubt of the whole story

"If Fairyland's inside Aldington Knoll," I said "why don't you dig it out?"

"That's what I says," said the young ploughboy

"There's a many have tried to dig on Aldington Knoll," said the respectable elder, solemnly, "one time and another But there's none as goes about to-day to tell what they got by digging"

The unanimity of vague belief that surrounded me was rather impressive, I felt there must surely be *some thing* at the root of so much conviction, and the already pretty keen curiosity I felt about the real facts of the case was distinctly whetted If these real facts were to be got from anyone, they were to be got from Skelmersdale himself, and I set myself, therefore, still more assiduously to efface the first bad impression I had made and win his confidence to the pitch of voluntary speech. In that endeavour I had a social advantage Being a person of affability and no apparent employment, and wearing tweeds and knickerbockers, I was naturally classed as an artist in Bignor, and in the remarkable code of social precedence prevalent in Bignor an artist ranks considerably higher than a grocer's assistant Skelmers

dale, like too many of his class is something of a snob, he had told me to "shut it" only under sudden, excessive provocation, and with, I am certain, a subsequent repentance, he was, I knew, quite glad to be seen walking about the village with me In due course, he accepted the proposal of a pipe and whisky in my rooms readily enough, and there scenting by some happy instinct that there was trouble of the heart in this and knowing that confidences beget confidences, I plied him with much of interest and suggestion from my real and fictitious past And it was after the third whisky of the third visit of that sort, if I remember rightly, *àpropos* of some artless expansion of a little affair that had touched and left me in my teens that he did at last, of his own free will and motion, break the ice "It was like that with me" he said "over there at Aldington It's just that that's so rum First I didn't care a bit and it was all her and afterwards when it was too late, it was, in a manner of speaking all me"

I forbore to jump upon this allusion, and so he presently threw out another, and in a little while he was making it as plain as daylight that the one thing he wanted to talk about now was this Fairyland adventure he had sat tight upon for so long You see, I'd done the trick with him and from being just another half incredulous, would be facetious stranger I had, by all my wealth of shameless self exposure become the possible confidant He had been bitten by the desire to show that he, too, had lived and felt many things, and the fever was upon him

He was certainly confoundedly allusive at first, and my eagerness to clear him up with a few precise questions was only equalled and controlled by my anxiety not to get to this sort of thing too soon But in another meeting or so the basis of confidence was complete, and from first to last I think I got most of the items and aspects—indeed, I got quite a number of times over almost everything that Mr Skelmersdale, with

He woke to find himself on a softer turf than ever he had slept on before, and under the shade of very dark trees that completely hid the sky Always, indeed in Fairyland the sky is hidden, it seems Except for one night when the fairies were dancing, Mr Skelmersdale, during all his time with them, never saw a star And of that night I am in doubt whether he was in Fairyland proper or out where the rings and rushes are, in those low meadows near the railway line at Smeeth

But it was light under these trees for all that and on the leaves and amidst the turf shone a multitude of glow worms very bright and fine Mr Skelmersdale's first impression was that he was *small*, and the next that quite a number of people still smaller were standing all about him For some reason, he says, he was neither surprised nor frightened, but sat up quite deliberately and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes And there all about him stood the smiling elves who had caught him sleeping under their privileges and had brought him into Fairyland

What these elves were like I have failed to gather, so vague and imperfect is his vocabulary, and so unobservant of all minor detail does he seem to have been They were clothed in something very light and beautiful that was neither wool, nor silk, nor leaves, nor the petals of flowers They stood all about him as he sat and waked, and down the glade towards him, down a glow worm avenue and fronted by a star, came at once that Fairy Lady who is the chief personage of his memory and tale Of her I gathered more She was clothed in filmy green, and about her little waist was a broad silver girdle Her hair waved back from her forehead on either side there were curls not too wayward and yet astray, and on her brow was a little tiara set with a single star Her sleeves were some sort of open sleeves that gave little glimpses of her arms her throat, I think, was a little displayed, because he speaks of the beauty of her neck and chin There was a neck

lace of coral about her white throat, and in her breast a coral-coloured flower She had the soft lines of a little child in her chin and cheeks and throat And her eyes, I gather, were of a kindled brown, very soft and straight and sweet under her level brows You see by these particulars how greatly this lady must have loomed in Mr Skelmersdale's picture Certain things he tried to express and could not express, "the way she moved," he said several times, and I fancy a sort of demure joyousness radiated from this Lady

And it was in the company of this delightful person, as the guest and chosen companion of this delightful person, that Mr Skelmersdale set out to be taken into the intimacies of Fairyland She welcomed him gladly and a little warmly—I suspect a pressure of his hand in both of hers and a lit face to his After all, ten years ago young Skelmersdale may have been a very comely youth And once she took his arm, and once, I think, she led him by the hand adown the glade that the glow-worms lit

Just how things chanced and happened there is no telling from Mr Skelmersdale's disarticulated skeleton of description He gives little unsatisfactory glimpses

. . . .

so abundantly There was a place where water splashed and gigantic king cups grew, and there in the hotter times the fairies bathed together There were games being played and dancing and much elvish love making, too, I think, among the moss branch thickets There can be no doubt that the Fairy Lady made love to Mr Skel-

mersdale, and no doubt either that this young man set himself to resist her A time came, indeed, when she sat on a bank beside him, in a quiet secluded place "all smelling of vi'lets," and talked to him of love

When her voice went low and she whispered," said Mr Skelmersdale, "and laid 'er 'and on my 'and, you know and came close with a soft, warm friendly way she ad, it was as much as I could do to keep my 'ad"

It seems he kept his head to a certain limited un f rt inate extent He saw "'ow the wind was blow ing ' he says, and so, sitting there in a place all smelling of violets, with the touch of this lovely Fairy Lady ab o it him, Mr Skelmersdale broke it to her gently—that he was engaged!

She had told him she loved him dearly, that he was a sweet human lad for her, and whatever he would ask of her he should have—even his heart's desire

And Mr Skelmersdale, who, I fancy, tried hard to avoid looking at her little lips as they just dropped apart and came together, led up to the more intima e question by saying he would like enough cap tal to start a little shop He'd just like to feel, he said, he had money enough to do that I imagine a little surprise in those brown eyes he talked about, but she *seemed* sympathetic for all that, and she asked him many ques tions about the little shop, "laughing like" all the time So he got to the complete statement of *his* affianced position, and told her all about Millie

"All?" said I

"Everything," said Mr Skelmersdale, "just who she was and where she lived, and everything *about her* I sort of felt I 'ad to all the time, I did"

"'Whatever you want you shall have,' said the Fairy Lady 'That's as good as done *You sha'l feel* you have the money just as you wish And now, you know—*you must kiss me*'"

And Mr Skelmersdale pretended not to hear the

latter part of her remark, and said she was very kind That he really didn't deserve she should be so kind And——

The Fairy Lady suddenly came quite close to him and whispered "Kiss me!"

"And," said Mr Skelmersdale, "like a fool, I did"

There are kisses and kisses, I am told, and this must have been quite the other sort from Millie's resonant signals of regard There was something magic in that kiss, assuredly it marked a turning point At any rate, this is one of the passages that he thought sufficiently important to describe most at length I have tried to get it right, I have tried to disentangle it from the hints and gestures through which it came to me, but I have no doubt that it was all different from my telling and far finer and sweeter, in the soft filtered light and the subtly stirring silences of the fairy glades The Fairy Lady asked him more about Millie, and was she very lovely, and so on—a great many times As to Millie's loveliness, I conceive him answering that she was "all right" And then, or on some such occasion, the Fairy Lady told him she had fallen in love with him as he [illegible]

[illegible] you know you can't, she said, so you must stop with me just a little while, and then you must go back to Millie" She told him that, and you know Skelmersdale was already in love with her, but the pure inertia of his mind kept him in the way he was going I imagine him sitting in a sort of stupefaction amidst all these glowing beautiful things, answering about his Millie and the little shop he projected and the need of a horse and cart And that absurd state of affairs must have gone on for days and days I see this little lady, hovering about him and trying to amuse him, too dainty to understand his complexity and too tender to let him go And he, you know, hypnotised as it were

by his earthly position, went his way with her hither and thither, blind to everything in Fairyland but this w nderful intimacy that had come to him It is hard, it is impossible, to give in print the effect of her radiant sweetness shining through the jungle of poor Skelmersdale s rough and broken sentences To me, at least, she shone clear amidst the muddle of his story like a glow worm in a tangle of weeds

There must have been many days of things while all th s was happening—and once, I say, they danced under the mo nlight in the fairy rings that stud the meadows near Sn ceth—but at last it all came to an end She d him into a great cavernous place, lit by "a red n g' th ht sort of thing," where there were coffers piled n coffers, and cups and golden boxes, and a great heap t what certainly seemed to all Mr Skelmersdale's senses—coined gold There were little gnomes amidst th s wealth, who saluted her at her coming, and stood de And suddenly she turned on him there with ghtly shining eyes

And now," she said, "you have been kind to stay with me so long and it is time I let you go You must go back to your Millie You must go back to your Millie and here—just as I promised you—they will give you gold"

"She choked like" said Mr Skelmersdale "At that, I had a sort of feeling——" (he touched his breastbone) "as though I was fainting here I felt pale, you know, and shivering, and even then—I 'adn't a thing to say"

He paused "Yes," I said

The scene was beyond his describing But I know that she kissed him good bye

"And you said nothing?"

"Nothing" he said "I stood like a stuffed calf She just looked back once, you know, and stood smiling like and crying—I could see the shine of her eyes—and then she was gone and there was all these little

fellows bustling about me, stuffing my 'ands and my pockets and the back of my collar and everywhere with gold "

And then it was, when the Fairy Lady had vanished, that Mr Skelmersdale really understood and knew He suddenly began plucking out the gold they were thrusting upon him, and shouting out at them to prevent their giving him more "'I don't *want* yer gold,' I said 'I 'aven't done yet I'm not going I want to speak to that Fairy Lady again' I started off to go after her and they held me back Yes, stuck their little ands against my middle and shoved me back They kept giving me more and more gold until it was running all down my trouser legs and dropping out of my ands 'I don't *want* yer gold,' I says to them, 'I want just to speak to the Fairy Lady again'"

"And did you?"

"It came to a tussle"

"Before you saw her?"

"I didn't see her When I got out from them she wasn't anywhere to be seen"

So he ran in search of her out of this red lit cave, down a long grotto, seeking her, and thence he came out in a great and desolate place athwart which a swarm of will-o' the wisps were flying to and fro And about him elves were dancing in derision, and the little gnomes came out of the cave after him, carrying gold in handfuls and casting it after him, shouting, "Fairy love and fairy gold! Fairy love and fairy gold!"

And when he heard these words, came a great fear that it was all over, and he lifted up his voice and called to her by her name, and suddenly set himself to run down the slope from the mouth of the cavern, through a place of thorns and briers, calling after her very loudly and often The elves danced about him unheeded, pinching him and pricking him, and the will o' the wisps circled round him and dashed into his face, and the gnomes pursued him shouting and pelting

him with fairy gold As he ran with all this strange rout about him and distracting him, suddenly he was knee deep in a swamp, and suddenly he was amidst thick twisted roots, and he caught his foot in one and stumbled and fell

He fell and he rolled over, and in that instant he found himself sprawling upon Aldington Knoll, all lonely under the stars

He sat up sharply at once, he says, and found he was very stiff and cold, and his clothes were damp with dew The first pallor of dawn and a chilly wind were coming up together He could have believed the whole thing a strangely vivid dream until he thrust his hand into his side pocket and found it stuffed with ashes Then he knew for certain it was fairy gold they had given him He could feel all their pinches and pricks still though there was never a bruise upon him And in that manner, and so suddenly, Mr Skelmersdale came out of Fairyland back into this world of men Even then he fancied the thing was but the matter of a night until he returned to the shop at Aldington Corner and discovered amidst their astonishment that he had been away three weeks

"Lor! the trouble I 'ad!" said Mr Skelmersdale

"How?"

"Explaining I suppose you've never had anything like that to explain"

"Never," I said, and he expatiated for a time on the behaviour of this person and that One name he avoided for a space

"And Millie?" said I at last

"I didn't seem to care a bit for seeing Millie," he said

"I expect she seemed changed?"

"Everyone was changed Changed for good Every one seemed big, you know, and coar[illegible] And their voices seemed loud Why, the sun, w[illegible]se in the morning, fair hit me in the eye!"

"And Millie?"

"I didn't want to see Millie"

"And when you did?"

"I came up against her Sunday, coming out of church 'Where you been?' she said, and I saw there was a row *I* didn't care if there was I seemed to forget about her even while she was there a talking to me She was just nothing I couldn't make out what ever I 'ad seen in 'er ever, or what there could 'ave been Sometimes when she wasn't about, I did get back a little, but never when she was there Then it was always the other came up and blotted her out Any ow, it didn't break her heart"

"Married?" I asked

"Married 'er cousin," said Mr Skelmersdale, and reflected on the pattern of the tablecloth for a space

When he spoke again it was clear that his former sweetheart had clean vanished from his mind, and that the talk had brought back the Fairy Lady triumphant in his heart He talked of her—soon he was letting out the oddest things, queer love secrets it would be treachery to repeat I think, indeed, that was the queerest thing in the whole affair, to hear that neat little grocer man after his story was done, with a glass of whisky beside him and a cigar between his fingers with [illegible] with a tir[illegible]er of the [illegible]ldn't eat,' [illegible]es in orders and got mixed with change There she was day and night, drawing me and drawing me Oh I wanted her Lord! how I wanted her! I was up there, most evenings I was up there on the Knoll, often even when it rained *I used to walk over the Knoll and round it* and round it, calling for them to let me in Shouting Near blubbering I was at times Daft I was and miserable *I kept on saying it was all a mistake And every* Sunday afternoon I went up there, wet and fine, though

I knew as well as you do it wasn't no good by day And I've tried to go to sleep there"

He stopped sharply and decided to drink some whisky

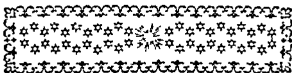
"I've tried to go to sleep there," he said, and I could swear his lips trembled "I've tried to go to sleep there often and often And, you know, I couldn't, sir —never I've thought if I could go to sleep there there might be something . But I've sat up there and laid up there, and I couldn't—not for thinking and longing It's the longing I've tried——"

He blew, drank up the rest of his whisky spasmodically stood up suddenly and buttoned his jacket staring closely and critically at the cheap oleographs beside the mantel meanwhile The little black note book in which he recorded the orders of his daily round projected stiffly from his breast pocket When all the

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"talking," he said at last at the door, and smiled wanly, and so vanished from my eyes And that is the tale of Mr Skelmersdale in Fairyland just as he told it to me



STORY THE SIXTH

The Inexperienced Ghost

THE scene amidst which Clayton told his last story comes back very vividly to my mind There he sat, for the greater part of the time, in the corner of the authentic settle by the spacious open fire, and Sanderson sat beside him smoking the Broseley clay that bore his name There was Evans, and that marvel among actors, Wish, who is also a modest man We had all come down to the Mermaid Club that Saturday morning, except Clayton, who had slept there overnight—which indeed gave him the opening of his story We had golfed until golfing was invisible, we had dined, and we were in that mood of tranquil kindliness when men will suffer a story When Clayton began to tell one, we naturally supposed he was lying It may be that indeed he was lying—of that the reader will speedily be able to judge as well as I He began, it is true, with an air of matter of fact anecdote, but that we thought was only the incurable artifice of the man

"I say!" he remarked, after a long consideration of the upward rain of sparks from the log that Sanderson had thumped, "you know I was alone here last night?"

"Except for the domestics," said Wish

"Who sleep in the other wing," said Clayton "Yes Well——" He pulled at his cigar for some little time

as though he still hesitated about his confidence Then he said, quite quietly, "I caught a ghost!"

"Caught a ghost, did you?" said Sanderson "Where is it?"

And Evans, who admires Clayton immensely and has been four weeks in America, shouted, "*Caught* a ghost, did you, Clayton? I'm glad of it! Tell us all about it right now"

Clayton said he would in a minute, and asked him to shut the door

He looked apologetically at me "There's no eaves dropping of course, but we don't want to upset our very excellent service with any rumours of ghosts in the place There's too much shadow and oak panelling to trifle with that And this, you know, wasn't a regular ghost I don't think it will come again—ever"

"You mean to say you didn't keep it?" said Sanderson

"I hadn't the heart to," said Clayton

And Sanderson said he was surprised

We laughed, and Clayton looked aggrieved "I know," he said, with the flicker of a smile, "but the fact is it really *was* a ghost, and I'm as sure of it as I am that I am talking to you now I'm not joking I mean what I say"

Sanderson drew deeply at his pipe, with one reddish eye on Clayton, and then emitted a thin jet of smoke more eloquent than many words

Clayton ignored the comment "It is the strangest thing that has ever happened in my life You know I never believed in ghosts or anything of the sort, before, ever, and then, you know, I bag one in a corner, and the whole business is in my hands"

He meditated still more profoundly and produced and began to pierce a second cigar with a curious little stabber he affected

"You talked to it?" asked Wish

"For the space, probably, of an hour."

"Charity?" I said, joining the party of the sceptics

"The poor devil was in trouble," said Clayton, bowed over his cigar-end and with the very faintest note of reproof

"Sobbing?" someone asked

Clayton heaved a realistic sigh at the memory "Good Lord!" he said, "yes" And then, "Poor fellow! yes"

"Where did you strike it?" asked Evans, in his best American accent

"I never realised," said Clayton, ignoring him, "the poor sort of thing a ghost might be," and he hung us up again for a time, while he sought for matches in his pocket and lit and warmed to his cigar

"I took an advantage," he reflected at last

We were none of us in a hurry "A character," he said, "remains just the same character for all that it's been disembodied That's a thing we too often forget People with a certain strength or fixity of purpose may have ghosts of a certain strength and fixity of purpose —most haunting ghosts, you know, must be as one idea d as monomaniacs and as obstinate as mules to come back again and again This poor creature wasn't" He suddenly looked up rather queerly, and his eye went round the room "I say it," he said, "in all kindliness but that is the plain truth of the case Even at the first glance he struck me as weak"

He punctuated with the help of his cigar

"I came upon him, you know, in the long passage His back was towards me and I saw him first Right off I knew him for a ghost He was transparent and whitish, clean through his chest I could see the glimmer of the little window at the end And not only his physique but his attitude struck me as being weak He looked, you know, as though he didn't know in the slightest whatever he meant to do One hand was on the panelling and the other fluttered to his mouth Like—*so!*"

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"For the space, probably, of an hour."

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"Sobbing?" someone asked

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"What sort of physique? said Sanderson

'Lean You know that sort of young man's neck that has two great flutings down the back, here and here—so! And a little, meanish head with scrubby hair and rather bad ears Shoulders bad, narrower than the hips, turndown collar, ready made short jacket, trousers baggy and a little frayed at the heels That's how he took me I came very quietly up the staircase. I did not carry a light, you know—the candles are on the landing table and there is that lamp—and I was in my list slippers, and I saw him as I came up I stopped dead at that—taking him in I wasn't a bit afraid I think that in most of these affairs one is never nearly so afraid or excited as one imagines one would be I was surprised and interested I thought, 'Good Lord! Here's a ghost at last' And I haven't believed for a moment in ghosts during the last five and twenty years"

"Um," said Wish

"I suppose I wasn't on the landing a moment before he found out I was there He turned on me *sharply*, and I saw the face of an immature young man a weak nose, a scrubby little moustache, a feeble chin So for an instant we stood—he looking over his shoulder at me—and regarded one another Then he seemed to remember his high calling He turned round, drew himself up, projected his face, raised his arms spread his hands in approved ghost fashion—came towards me As he did so his little jaw dropped, and he emitted a faint, drawn-out 'Boo' No, it wasn't—not a bit dreadful I'd dined I'd had a bottle of champagne and being all alone, perhaps two or three—perhaps even four or five—whiskies, so I was as solid as rocks and no more frightened than if I'd been assailed by a frog 'Boo!' I said 'Nonsense You don't belong to *this* place What are you doing here?'

"I could see him wince 'Boo—oo,' he said

"'Boo—be hanged! Are you a *member*?' I said;

and just to show I didn't care a pin for him I stepped through a corner of him and made to light my candle 'Are you a member?' I repeated, looking at him sideways

"He moved a little so as to stand clear of me and his bearing became crestfallen 'No,' he said, in answer to the persistent interrogation of my eye, 'I'm not a member—I'm a ghost'

"'Well, that doesn't give you the run of the Mermaid Club Is there anyone you want to see, or anything of that sort?' And doing it as steadily as possible for fear that he should mistake the carelessness of whisky for the distraction of fear, I got my candle alight I turned on him, holding it 'What are you doing here?' I said

"He had dropped his hands and stopped his booing, and there he stood, abashed and awkward, the ghost of a weak silly, aimless young man 'I'm haunting' he said

"'You haven't any business to,' I said in a quiet voice

"'I'm a ghost' he said, as if in defence

"'That may be, but you haven't any business to haunt here This is a respectable private club people often stop here with nursemaids and children, and

[illegible]

thing of that sort?

'None, sir, but I thought as it was old and oak panelled——'

"'That's *no* excuse' I regarded him firmly 'Your coming here is a mistake,' I said in a tone of friendly superiority I feigned to see if I had my matches, and then looked up at him frankly 'If I

were you I wouldn't wait for cock crow—I'd vanish right away'

He looked embarrassed 'The fact *is*, sir——' he began

'I'd vanish,' I said, driving it home

"'The fact is, sir, that—somehow—I can't'

'You *can't?*'

"No sir There's something I've forgotten I've been hanging about here since midnight last night, hiding in the cupboards of the empty bedrooms and things like that I'm flurried I've never come haunting before, and it seems to put me out'

'Put you out?'

'Yes sir I've tried to do it several times and it doesn't come off There's some little thing has slipped me and I can't get back'

That, you know, rather bowled me over He looked at me in such an abject way that for the life of me I couldn't keep up quite the high hectoring vein I had adopted 'That's queer,' I said, and as I spoke I fancied I heard someone moving about down below 'Come into my room and tell me more about it,' I said 'I didn't, of course, understand this' and I tried to take him by the arm But, of course, you might as well have tried to take hold of a puff of smoke! I had forgotten my number, I think, anyhow, I remember going into several bedrooms—it was lucky I was the only soul in that wing—until I saw my traps 'Here we are,' I said, and sat down in the armchair, 'sit down and tell me all about it It seems to me you have got yourself into a jolly awkward position, old chap'

"Well, he said he wouldn't sit down, he'd prefer to flit up and down the room if it was all the same to me And so he did, and in a little while we were deep in a long and serious talk And presently, you know something of those whiskies and sodas evaporated out of me, and I began to realise just a little what a thundering rum and weird business it was that I was in

There he was, semi transparent—the proper conventional phantom, and noiseless except for his ghost of a voice—flitting to and fro in that nice, clean, chintz hung old bedroom You could see the gleam of the copper candlesticks through him, and the lights on the brass fender, and the corners of the framed engravings on the wall, and there he was telling me all about this wretched little life of his that had recently ended on earth He hadn't a particularly honest face, you know, but being transparent, of course, he couldn't avoid telling the truth"

"Eh?" said Wish, suddenly sitting up in his chair

"What?" said Clayton

"Being transparent—couldn't avoid telling the truth—I don't see it,' said Wish

"*I* don't see it," said Clayton, with inimitable assurance "But it *is* so, I can assure you nevertheless I don't bel eve he got once a nail s breadth off the Bible truth He told me how he had been killed—he went down into a London basement with a candle to look for a leakage of gas—and described himself as a senior English master in a London private school when that release occurred '

"Poor wretch!" said I

"That's what I thought, and the more he talked the more I thought it There he was, purposeless in life and purposeless out of it He talked of his father and mother and his schoolmaster, and all who had ever been anything to him in the world, meanly He had been too sensitive, too nervous, none of them had ever valued him properly or understood him he said He had never had a real friend in the world, I think, he had never had a success He had shirked games and failed examinations 'It's like that with some people,' he said, 'whenever I got into the examination room or anywhere everything seemed to go' Engaged to be married of course—to another over sensitive person, I suppose—when the indiscretion with the gas escape

led his affairs 'And where are you now?' I asked 'Not in——?'

He wasn't clear on that point at all The impression he gave me was of a sort of vague intermediate state a special reserve for souls too non existent for anything so positive as either sin or virtue *I* don't know He was much too egotistical and unobservant to give me any clear idea of the kind of place, kind of country there is on the Other Side of Things Wherever he was, he seems to have fallen in with a set of kindred spirits ghosts of weak Cockney young men who were on a footing of Christian names, and among these there was certainly a lot of talk about 'going haunting' and things like that Yes—going haunting! They seemed to think 'haunting' a tremendous adventure and most of them funked it all the time And so primed you know, he had come"

"But really!" said Wish to the fire

"These are the impressions he gave me, anyhow," said Clayton, modestly "I may, of course, have been in a rather uncritical state, but that was the sort of background he gave to himself He kept flitting up and down, with his thin voice going—talking talking about his wretched self, and never a word of clear, firm statement from first to last He was thinner and sillier and more pointless than if he had been real and alive Only then, you know, he would not have been in my bedroom here—if he *had* been alive I should have kicked him out"

"Of course," said Evans, "there *are* poor mortals like that"

"And there's just as much chance of their *having* ghosts as the rest of us," I admitted

"What gave a sort of point to him, you know, was the fact that he did seem within limits to have found himself out The mess he had made of haunting *had* depressed him terribly He had been told it would be a 'lark'; he had come expecting it to be a 'lark' and

here it was nothing but another failure added to his record! He proclaimed himself an utter out and-out failure He said, and I can quite believe it, that he had never tried to do anything all his life that he hadn't made a perfect mess of—and through all the wastes of eternity he never would If he had had sympathy perhaps—— He paused at that, and stood regarding me He remarked that, strange as it might seem to me, nobody, not anyone, ever, had given him the amount of sympathy I was doing now I could see what he wanted straight away, and I determined to head him off at once I may be a brute you know, but being the Only Real Friend, the recipient of the confidences of one of these egotistical weaklings, ghost or body, is beyond my physical endurance I got up briskly 'Don't you brood on these things too much I said The thing you've got to do is to get out of this—get out of this sharp You pull yourself together and *try* I can't,' he said 'You try,' I said, and try he did

"Try!" said Sanderson "*How?*"

"Passes," said Clayton

"Passes?"

"Complicated series of gestures and passes with the hands That's how he had come in and that's how he had to get out again Lord! what a business I had!"

"But how could *any* series of passes——" I began

"My dear man," said Clayton turning on me and putting a great emphasis on certain words, "you want *everything* clear I don't know *how* All I know is that you *do*—that *he* did, anyhow, at least After a fearful time, you know, he got his passes right and suddenly disappeared"

"Did you," said Sanderson slowly, "observe the passes?"

"Yes," said Clayton, and seemed to think "It was tremendously queer," he said "There we were, I and this thin vague ghost in that silent room, in this silent, empty inn, in this silent little Friday night town

Not a sound except our voices and a faint panting he made when he swung There was the bedroom candle and one candle on the dressing table alight, that was all—sometimes one or other would flare up into a tall lean astonished flame for a space And queer things happened 'I can t,' he said, 'I shall never——' And s lenly he sat down on a little chair at the foot of the bed and began to sob and sob Lord! what a harrow ng whimpering thing he seemed!

You pull yourself together,' I said and tried to pat h m on the back, and my confounded hand went th r gh him! By that time, you know, I wasn't near y so—massive as I had been on the landing I got he q ieerness of it full I remember snatching back m hand out of him, as it were, with a little thrill, and walk ng over to the dressing table 'You pull your self together,' I said to him, 'and try' And in order to encourage and help him I began to try as well'

What!' said Sanderson, "the passes?'

Yes, the passes"

"But——" I said, moved by an idea that eluded me for a space

"This is interesting" said Sanderson with his finger in his pipe bowl "You mean to say this ghost of yours gave way——"

"D d his level best to give away the whole con rounded barrier? *Yes*"

"He didn t," said Wish, "he couldn't Or you d have gone there too"

"That s precisely it," I said, finding my elusive idea put into words for me

'That *is* precisely it," said Clayton, with thoughtful eyes upon the fire

For just a little while there was silence

"And at last he did it?' said Sanderson

"At last he did it I had to keep him up to it hard, but he did it at last—rather suddenly He despaired, we had a scene, and then he got up abruptly

and asked me to go through the whole performance, slowly, so that he might see. 'I believe,' he said, 'if I could *see* I should spot what was wrong at once.' And he did. '*I* know,' he said. 'What do you know?' said I. '*I* know,' he repeated. Then he said, peevishly, 'I *can't* do it, if you look at me—I really *can't*; it's been that, partly, all along. I'm such a nervous fellow that you put me out.' Well, we had a bit of an argument. Naturally I wanted to see, but he was as obstinate as a mule, and suddenly I had come over as tired as a dog—he tired me out. 'All right,' I said, '*I* won't look at you,' and turned towards the mirror, on the wardrobe by the bed.

"He started off very fast. I tried to follow him by looking in the looking-glass, to see just what it was had hung. Round went his arms and his hands, so, and so, and so, and then with a rush came to the last gesture of all—you stand erect and open out your arms—and so, don't you know, he stood. And then he didn't! He didn't! He wasn't! I wheeled round from the looking-glass to him. There was nothing! I was alone, with the flaring candles and a staggering mind. What had happened? Had anything happened? Had I been dreaming? And then, with an absurd note of finality about it, the clock upon the landing discovered the moment was ripe for striking *one*. So!—Ping! And I was as grave and sober as a judge, with all my champagne and whisky gone into the vast serene. Feeling queer, you know—confoundedly *queer!* Queer! Good Lord!"

He regarded his cigar ash for a moment. "That's all that happened," he said.

"And then you went to bed?" asked Evans.

"What else was there to do?"

I looked Wish in the eye. We wanted to scoff, and there was something, something perhaps in Clayton's voice and manner, that hampered our desire.

"And about these passes?" said Sanderson.

'I believe I could do them now"

'Oh!" said Sanderson, and produced a pen knife and set himself to grub the dottel out of the bowl of his clay

'Why don't you do them now?" said Sanderson shutting his pen knife with a click

"That's what I'm going to do," said Clayton

"They won't work," said Evans

"If they do——" I suggested

"You know, I'd rather you didn't," said Wish stretching out his legs

"Why?" asked Evans

"I'd rather he didn't," said Wish

"But he hasn't got 'em right," said Sanderson, plugging too much tobacco into his pipe

"All the same, I'd rather he didn't," said Wish

We argued with Wish He said that for Clayton to go through those gestures was like mocking a serious matter "But you don't believe——?" I said Wish glanced at Clayton, who was staring into the fire, weighing something in his mind "I do—more than half anyhow, I do," said Wish

"Clayton," said I, "you're too good a liar for us Most of it was all right But that disappearance happened to be convincing Tell us, it's a tale of cock and bull"

He stood up without heeding me, took the middle of the hearthrug, and faced me For a moment he regarded his feet thoughtfully, and then for all the rest of the time his eyes were on the opposite wall, with an intent expression He raised his two hands slowly to the level of his eyes and so began . .

Now, Sanderson is a Freemason, a member of the lodge of the Four Kings, which devotes itself so ably to the study and elucidation of all the mysteries of Masonry past and present, and among the students of this lodge Sanderson is by no means the least He followed Clayton's motions with a singular interest in his

reddish eye "That's not bad," he said, when it was done "You really do, you know, put things together Clayton, in a most amazing fashion But there's one little detail out '

"I know," said Clayton "I believe I could tell you which"

"Well?"

"This" said Clayton, and did a queer little twist and writhing and thrust of the hands

"Yes'

"That, you know, was what *he* couldn't get right,' said Clayton "But how do *you*——?'

"Most of this business and particularly how you invented it, I don't understand at all" said Sanderson, "but just that phase—I do" He reflected "These happen to be a series of gestures—connected with a certain branch of esoteric Masonry— Probably you know Or else—— *How?*" He reflected still further 'I do not see I can do any harm in telling you just the proper twist After all, if you know, you know, if you don't, you don't"

"I know nothing," said Clayton, "except what the poor devil let out last night"

"Well, anyhow," said Sanderson, and placed his churchwarden very carefully upon the shelf over the fireplace Then very rapidly he gesticulated with his hands

"So?" said Clayton, repeating

"So," said Sanderson, and took his pipe in hand again

"Ah *now*" said Clayton, "I can do the whole hing—right"

He stood up before the waning fire and smiled at us all But I think there was just a little hesitation in his smile "If I begin——" he said

"I wouldn't begin," said Wish

"It's all right!" said Evans "Matter is indestructible You don't think any jiggery pokery of this sort

is going to snatch Clayton into the world of shades Not it! You may try, Clayton, so far as I'm concerned until your arms drop off at the wrists"

"I don't believe that," said Wish, and stood up and put his arm on Clayton's shoulder "You've made me half believe in that story somehow, and I don't want to see the thing done"

"G iness!" said I, "here's Wish frightened!"

"I a , said Wish, with real or admirably feigned er "I believe that if he goes through these s right he'll *go*"

"He'll not do anything of the sort," I cried "There's only one way out of this world for men, and Clayton is thirty years from that Besides And h a ghost! Do you think——?"

Wish interrupted me by moving He walked out from among our chairs and stopped beside the table and stood there "Clayton," he said, "you're a fool"

Clayton, with a humorous light in his eyes, smiled back at him "Wish," he said, "is right and all you others are wrong I shall go I shall get to the end of these passes, and as the last swish whistles through the air, Presto!—this hearthrug will be vacant, the room will be blank amazement, and a respectably dressed gentleman of fifteen stone will plump into the world of shades I'm certain So will you be I decline to argue further Let the thing be tried"

"*No*," said Wish, and made a step and ceased, and Clayton raised his hands once more to repeat the spirit's passing

By that time, you know, we were all in a state of tension—largely because of the behaviour of Wish We sat all of us with our eyes on Clayton—I, at least, with a sort of tight, stiff feeling about me as though from the back of my skull to the middle of my thighs my body had been changed to steel And there, with a gravity that was imperturbably serene Clayton *bowed* and swayed and waved his hands and arms before us

As he drew towards the end one piled up, one tingled in one's teeth The last gesture, I have said, was to swing the arms out wide open, with the face held up And when at last he swung out to this closing gesture I ceased even to breathe It was ridiculous, of course, but you know that ghost s ory feeling It was after dinner, in a queer, old shadowy house Would he, after all——?

There he stood for one stupendous moment, with his arms open and his upturned face, assured and bright, in the glare of the hanging lamp We hung through that moment as if it were an age, and then came from all of us something that was half a sigh of infinite relief and half a reassuring "*No!*" For visibly—he wasn't going It was all nonsense He had told an idle story, and carried it almost to conviction, that was all!

And then in that moment the face of Clayton changed

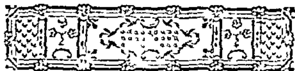
It changed It changed as a lit house changes when its lights are suddenly extinguished His eyes were *suddenly eyes that were fixed, his smile was frozen on* his lips, and he stood there still He stood there, very gently swaying

That moment, too, was an age And then, you know, chairs were scraping, things were falling, and we were all moving His knees seemed to give, and he *fell forward, and Evans rose and caught him in his* arms .

It stunned us all For a minute I suppose no one said a coherent thing We believed it, yet could not believe it I came out of a muddled stupefaction to find myself kneeling beside him, and his vest and *shirt were torn open, and Sanderson's hand lay on his* heart .

Well—the simple fact before us could very well wait our convenience, there was no hurry for us to compre hend It lay there for an hour, it lies athwart my memory, black and amazing still, to this day. Clayton *had, indeed, passed into the world that lies so near to*

and so far from our own, and he had gone thither by the only road that mortal man may take But whether he did indeed pass there by that poor ghost's incantation or whether he was stricken suddenly by apoplexy in the midst of an idle tale—as the coroner's jury would have us believe—is no matter for my judging, it is just one of those inexplicable riddles that must remain unsolved until the final solution of all things shall come. All I c[illegible]ainly know is that, in the very moment, in [illegible] very instant, of concluding those passes he changed [illegible] [illegible]gered, and fell down before us—dead!



STORY THE SEVENTH

Jimmy Goggles the God

"IT isn't everyone who's been a god," said the sunburnt man "But it's happened to me Among other things"

I intimated my sense of his condescension

"*It don't leave much for ambition, does it?*" said the sunburnt man

"I was one of those men who were saved from the *Ocean Pioneer* Gummy! how time flies! It's twenty years ago I doubt if you'll remember anything of the *Ocean Pioneer*?"

The name was familiar, and I tried to recall when and where I had read it The *Ocean Pioneer*? "Something about gold dust" I said vaguely, "but the precise——"

"That's it," he said "In a beastly little channel she hadn't no business in—dodging pirates It was before they'd put the kybosh on that business And there'd been volcanoes or something and all the rocks was wrong There's places about by Soona where you fair have to follow the rocks about to see where they're going next. Down she went in twenty fathoms before

yo[illegible] could have dealt for whist, with fifty thousand p[illegible]nds worth of gold aboard, it was said, in one form or a[illegible]other

[illegible] urs?"

Three

"I remember the case now," I said "There was some [illegible] about salvage——"

[illegible] the word salvage the sunburnt man exploded [illegible]age so extraordinarily horrible that I stopped He came down to more ordinary swearing, and [illegible]nself up abruptly "Excuse me," he said, [illegible] salvage!"

H[illegible] over towards me "I was in that job," he sa[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] and for some time conversed by means of such p[illegible] unprogressive axioms At last he took up his [illegible]ain

"There was me," said the sunburnt man, "and a seaman named Jacobs, and Always, the mate of the *Ocean Pioneer* And him it was that set the whole thing going I remember him now, when we was in the jolly boat suggesting it all to our minds just by one sentence He was a wonderful hand at suggesting things 'There was forty thousand pounds,' he said, 'on that ship, and it's for me to say just where she went down' It didn't need much brains to tumble to that And he was the leader from the first to the last. He got hold of the Sanderses and their brig they were brothers and the brig was the *Pride of Banya* and he it was bought the diving dress—a second hand one with a compressed air apparatus instead of pumping He'd have done the diving too, if it hadn't made him sick going down And the salvage people were mucking about with a chart he'd cooked up, as solemn as could be, at Starr Race, a hundred and twenty miles away

"I can tell you we was a happy lot aboard that brig

jokes and drink and bright hopes all the time It all seemed so neat and clean and straightforward and what rough chaps call a 'cert And we used to speculate how the other blessed lot, the proper salvagers who'd started two days before us were getting on, until our sides fairly ached We all messed together in the Sanderses' cabin—it was a curious crew all officers and no men—and there stood the diving dress waiting its turn Young Sanders was a humorous sort of chap, and there certainly was something funny in the confounded thing's great fat head and its stare and he made us see it too 'Jimmy Goggles' he used to call it, and talk to it like a Christian Asked if he was married, and how Mrs Goggles was and all the little Goggleses Fit to make you split And every blessed day all of us used to drink the health of Jimmy Goggles in rum, and unscrew his eye and pour a glass of rum in him, until, instead of that nasty mackintosheriness, he smelt as nice in his inside as a cask of rum It was jolly times we had in those days, I can tell you—little suspecting, poor chaps! what was a coming

"We weren't going to throw away our chances by any blessed hurry, you know, and we spent a whole day sounding our way towards where the *Ocean Pioneer* had gone down, right between two chunks of ropy grey rock—lava rocks that rose nearly out of the water We had to lay off about half a mile to get a safe anchorage, and there was a thundering row who should stop on board And there she lay just as she had gone down, so that you could see the top of the masts that was still standing perfectly distinctly The row ended in all coming in the boat I went down in the diving dress on Friday morning directly it was light

"What a surprise it was! I can see it all now quite distinctly It was a queer looking place, and the light was just coming People over here think every blessed place in the tropics is a flat shore and palm trees and surf, bless 'em! This place, for instance, wasn't a bit

that way Not common rocks they were, undermined by wa es but great curved banks like ironwork cinder heaps with green slime below, and thorny shrubs and th i gs just waving upon them here and there, and the water glassy calm and clear, and showing you a kind of dirty grey black shine, with huge flaring red brown weeds spreading motionless, and crawling and darting things going through it And far away beyond the ditches and pools and the heaps was a forest on the mo intain flank, growing again after the fires and cinder showers of the last eruption And the other way forest, too and a kind of broken—what is it?—amby theatre of black and rusty cinders rising out of it all, and the sea in a kind of bay in the middle

The dawn, I say, was just coming, and there wasn't m ich colour about things, and not a human being but rselves anywhere in s ght up or down the channel Except the *Pride of Banya* lying out beyond a lump of rocks towards the line of the sea

Not a human being in sight," he repeated, and pa sed

I don't know where they came from, not a bit And we were feeling so safe that we were all alone that po r young Sanders was a singing I was in Jimmy G ggles all except the helmet 'Easy,' says Always there's her mast' And after I'd had just one squ nt over the gunwale I caught up the bogey and almost tipped out as old Sanders brought the boat round When the windows were screwed and everything was all right I shut the valve from the air belt in order to help my sinking, and jumped overboard feet foremost—for we hadn't a ladder I left the boat pitching and all of them staring down into the water after me as my head sank down into the weeds an l blackness that lay about the mast I suppose nobody, not the mo t cautious chap in the world would have bothered about a look-out at such a desolate place It stunk of solitude

"Of course you must understand that I was a green

horn at diving None of us were divers We'd had to muck about with the thing to get the way of it, and this *was the first time I'd been deep It feels damnable* Your ears hurt beastly I don't know if you've ever hurt yourself yawning or sneezing, but it takes you like that, only ten times worse And a pain over the eye brows here—splitting—and a feeling like influenza in the head And it isn't all heaven in your lungs and things And going down feels like the beginning of a lift, only it keeps on And you can't turn your head to see what's above you, and you can t get a fair squint at what's happening to your feet without bending down something painful And being deep it was dark, let alone the blackness of the ashes and mud that formed the bottom It was like going down out of the dawn back into the night, so to speak

"The mast came up like a ghost out of the black, and then a lot of fishes, and then a lot of flapping red sea weed, and then whack I came with a kind of dull bang on the deck of the *Ocean Pioneer* and the fishes that had been feeding on the dead rose about me like a swarm of flies from road stuff in summer time I turned on the compressed air again—for the suit was a bit thick and mackintoshery after all, in spite of the rum—and stood recovering myself It struck coolish down [illegible]

account of the streamers of seaweed that floated up on either side of the ship And far overhead just a moony, deep green blue The deck of the ship except for a slight list to starboard was level, and lay all dark and long between the weeds, clear except where the masts had snapped when she rolled and vanishing into black night towards the forecastle There weren't any dead on the decks, most were in the weeds alongside, I suppose, but afterwards I found two skeletons lying in the

passengers' cabins, where death had come to them It was curious to stand on that deck and recognise it all, bit by bit, a place against the rail where I'd been fond of smoking by starlight, and the corner where an old chap from Sydney used to flirt with a widow we had aboard A comfortable couple they'd been, only a month ago, and now you couldn't have got a meal for a baby crab off either of them

"I've always had a bit of philosophical turn, and I dare say I spent the best part of five minutes in such thoughts before I went below to find where the blessed dust was stored It was slow work hunting, feeling it was for the most part, pitchy dark, with confusing blue gleams down the companion And there were things moving about, a dab at my glass once, and once a pinch at my leg Crabs I expect I kicked a lot of loose stuff that puzzled me, and stooped and picked up some thing all knobs and spikes What do you think? Back bone! But I never had any particular feeling for bones We had talked the affair over pretty thoroughly, and Always knew just where the stuff was stowed I found it that trip I lifted a box one end an inch or more"

He broke off in his story "I've lifted it," he said, "as near as that! Forty thousand pounds' worth of pure gold! Gold! I shouted inside my helmet as a kind of cheer and hurt my ears I was getting con founded stuffy and tired by this time—I must have been down twenty five minutes or more—and I thought this was good enough I went up the companion again, and as my eyes came up flush with the deck, a thundering great crab gave a kind of hysterical jump and went scuttling off sideways Quite a start it gave me. I stood up clear on deck and shut the valve behind the helmet to let the air accumulate to carry me up again—I noticed a kind of whacking from above, as though they were hitting the water with an oar, but I didn't look up I fancied they were signalling me to come up.

"And then someth ng shot down by me—someth ng heavy, and stood a ‡ ver in the p anks I looked and there was a long kn fe I d seen young Sanders handl ng Thinks I he s dr ppe l it and I was st ll calling him this k nd of fool and that—f r it m ght have hurt me serious—wl en I be an to l ft and drive up towards the dayl ght Just a ɔ t the level f the top spars of the *Ocean Pioneer* I a k I came aga nst someth ng s nk ing do vn and a b t kn cked n front of my helmet Then someth n else s l no fr ghtf l It was a big we ght atop of me whate er it was and moving and tw st no abo t I l have tho ght it a big octopus or some such th ng if it ha n t been for the boot But octop ses l n t wear b ts It was all in a moment of co rse I fel m self s nk ng down aga n and I threw my arms al o to keep stea ly and the whole lot rolled free f me and shot down as I went up——'

He pau e l

"I saw yo ng San lers s face over a naked black shoulder and a spear l ven clean thro gh h s neck and o t of h s m o th and neck what l oked l ke sp rts of pink smoke in the wa er And do vn they went clutch ing one an her and t rn ng over and both too far gone to leave go An l n ano l er second my helmet came a s ha k fit to sp t aga nst the niggers' canoe It was n v rs Two c n es f ll

'It was l ely t mes I tell you? Overboard came Always w h three spears n h m There was the legs of three or f r b ack chaps k ck ng abo t me in the water I co ldn t see m ch but I saw the game was up at a glance gave my valve a tremendo s twist and went b bbl ng down again after poor Always in as awf l a state of scare and astonishment as yo can well imagine I pas ed vo ng San lers and the n gger go ng up aga n and st ool no st ll a bit and in another moment I was stand ng in the dim again on the deck of the *Ocean P neer*

"'G mmy' th nks I 'here s a fix! Niggers?' At

first I couldn't see anything for it but Stifle below or Stabs above I didn't properly understand how much air there *was to last* me out, but I didn't feel like standing very *much more* of it down below I was hot and frightfully heady quite apart from the blue funk I was in We'd never reckoned with these beastly natives, filthy Papuan beasts It wasn't any good coming up where I was, but I *had* to do something On the spur of the *moment*, I clambered over the side of the brig and landed among the weeds, and set off through the darkness as fast as I could I just stopped once and knelt and twisted back my head in the helmet and had a look up It was a most extraordinary bright green blue above and the two canoes and the boat floating there *very small* and distant like a kind of twisted H And it made me feel sick to squint up at it, and think what the pitching and swaying of the three meant

'It was just about the most horrible ten minutes I *ever had*, blundering about in that darkness—pressure something *awful*, like being buried in sand, pain across the chest sick with funk and breathing nothing as it seemed but the smell of rum and mackintosh Gummy! After a bit, I found myself going up a steepish sort of slope I had another squint to see if anything was visible of the canoes and boats, and then kept on I stopped *with my* head a foot from the surface, and tried to see where I was going but, of course, nothing was to be seen but the reflection of the bottom Then out I *dashed* like knocking my head through a mirror Directly I got my eyes out of the water, I saw I'd come up a kind of beach near the *forest*. I had a look round, but the natives and the brig were both hidden by a big hummucky heap of twisted lava The born fool in me suggested a run for the woods I didn't take the helmet off but I eased open one of the windows and, after a bit of a pant went on out of the water You'd hardly imagine how clean and light the air tasted

"Of course, with four inches of lead in your boot soles, and your head in a copper knob the size of a football, and been thirty five minutes under water, you don't break any records running I ran like a plough boy going to work And halfway to the trees I saw a dozen niggers or more, coming out in a gaping, astonished sort of way to meet me

"I just stopped dead, and cursed myself for all the fools out of London I had about as much chance of cutting back to the water as a turned turtle I just screwed up my window again to leave my hands free and waited for them There wasn't anything else for me to do

"But they didn't come on very much I began to suspect why 'Jimmy Goggles,' I says, 'it's your beauty does it' I was inclined to be a little light headed I think with all these dangers about and the change in the pressure of the blessed air 'Who're ye staring at?' I said as if the savages could hear me 'What d'ye take me for? I'm hanged if I don't give you something to stare at,' I said and with that I screwed up the escape valve and turned on the compressed air from the belt until I was swelled out like a blown frog Regular imposing it must have been I'm blessed if they'd come on a step and presently one and then another went down on their hands and knees They didn't know what to make of me, and they was doing the extra polite which was very wise and reasonable of them I had half a mind to edge back seaward and cut and run, but it seemed too hopeless A step back and they'd have been after me And out of sheer desperation I began to march towards them up the beach with slow, heavy steps and waving my blown out arms about in a dignified manner And inside of me I was singing as small as a tomtit

"But there's nothing like a striking appearance to help a man over a difficulty—I've found that before and since People like ourselves, who're up to diving dress-

by the time we're seven, can scarcely imagine the effect of one on a simple minded savage One or two of these niggers cut and run, the others started in a great hurry trying to knock their brains out on the ground And on I went as slow and solemn and silly looking and artful as a jobbing plumber It was evident they took me for something immense

"Then up jumped one and began pointing, making extraordinary gestures to me as he did so, and all the others began sharing their attention between me and something out at sea 'What's the matter now,' I said I turned slowly on account of my dignity, and there I saw, coming round a point, the poor old *Pride of Banya* towed by a couple of canoes The sight fairly made me sick But they evidently expected some recognition, so I waved my arms in a striking sort of non committal manner And then I turned and stalked on towards the trees again At that time I was praying like mad I remember, over and over again 'Lord help me through with it! Lord help me through with it!' It's only fools who know nothing of dangers can afford to laugh at praying

"But these niggers weren't going to let me walk through and away like that They started a kind of bowing dance about me, and sort of pressed me to take a pathway that lay through the trees It was clear to me they didn't take me for a British citizen, whatever else they thought of me, and for my own part I was never less anxious to own up to the old country

"You'd hardly believe it, perhaps, unless you're familiar with savages, but these poor misguided, ignorant creatures took me straight to their kind of joss place to present me to the blessed old black stone there By this time I was beginning to sort of realise the depth of their ignorance, and directly I set eyes on this deity I took my cue I started a baritone howl, 'wow wow,' very long on one note, and began waving my arms about a lot, and then very slowly and ceremoniously turned

their image over on its side and sat down on it I wanted to sit down badly, for diving dresses ain't much wear in the tropics Or, to put it different like, they're a sight too much It took away their breath, I could see, my sitting on their joss, but in less time than a minute they made up their minds and were hard at work worshipping me And I can tell you I felt a bit relieved to see things turning out so well, in spite of the weight on my shoulders and feet

"But what made me anxious was what the chaps in the canoes might think when they came back If they'd seen me in the boat before I went down and without the helmet on—for they might have been spying and hiding since over night—they would very likely take a different view from the others I was in a deuce of a stew about that for hours, as it seemed, until the shindy of the arrival began

"But they took it down—the whole blessed village took it down At the cost of sitting up stiff and stern, as much like those sitting Egyptian images one sees as I could manage, for pretty nearly twelve hours, I should guess at least on end, I got over it You'd hardly think what it meant in that heat and stink I don't think any of them dreamt of the man inside I was just a wonderful leathery great joss that had come up with luck out of the water But the fatigue! the heat! the beastly closeness! the mackintosheriness and the rum! and the fuss! They lit a stinking fire on a kind of lava slab there was before me, and brought in a lot of gory muck—the worst parts of what they were feasting on outside the Beasts—and burnt it all in my honour I was getting a bit hungry but I understand now how gods manage to do without eating what with the smell of burnt offerings about them And they brought in a lot of the stuff they'd got off the brig and among other stuff what I was bit relieved to see the kind of pneumatic pump that was used for the compressed air affair and then a lot of chaps and girls came in and danced

about me something disgraceful It's extraordinary the different ways different people have of showing respect If I'd had a hatchet handy I'd have gone for the lot of them—they made me feel that wild All this time I sat as stiff as company, not knowing anything better to do And at last when nightfall came, and the wattle joss house place got a bit too shadowy for their taste—all these here savages are afraid of the dark you know—and I started a sort of 'Moo' noise, they built big bonfires outside and left me alone in peace in the darkness of my hut free to unscrew my windows a bit and think things over, and feel just as bad as I liked And Lord! I was sick

"I was weak and hungry, and my mind kept on behaving like a beetle on a pin, tremendous activity and nothing done at the end of it Come round just where it was before There was sorrowing for the other chaps beastly drunkards certainly, but not deserving such a fate and young Sanders with the spear through his neck wouldn't go out of my mind There was the treasure down there in the *Ocean Pioneer*, and how one might get it and hide it somewhere safer, and get away and come back for it And there was the puzzle where to get anything to eat I tell you I was fair rambling I was afraid to ask by signs for food, for fear of behaving too human and so there I sat and hungered until very near the dawn Then the village got a bit quiet and I couldn't stand it any longer, and I went out and got some stuff like artichokes in a bowl and some sour milk What was left of these I put away among the other offerings just to give them a hint of my tastes And in the morning they came to worship and found me sitting up stiff and respectable on their previous god, just as they'd left me overnight I'd got my back against the central pillar of the hut, and, practically, I was asleep And that's how I became a god among the heathen—a false god no doubt, and blasphemous, but one can't always pick and choose

"Now, I don't want to crack myself up as a god beyond my merits, but I must confess that while I was god to these people they was extraordinary successful. I don't say there's anything in it, mind you. They won a battle with another tribe—I got a lot of offerings I didn't want through it—they had wonderful fishing, and their crop of pourra was exceptional fine. And they counted the capture of the brig among the benefits I brought 'em. I must say I don't think that was a poor record for a perfectly new hand. And, though perhaps you'd scarcely credit it, I was the tribal god of those beastly savages for pretty nearly four months.

"What else could I do, man? But I didn't wear that diving dress all the time. I made 'em rig me up a sort of holy of holies and a deuce of a time I had too, making them understand what it was I wanted them to do. That indeed was the great difficulty—making them understand my wishes. I couldn't let myself down by talking their lingo badly—even if I'd been able to speak at all—and I couldn't go flapping a lot of gestures at them. So I drew pictures in sand and sat down beside them and hooted like one o'clock. Sometimes they did the things I wanted all right, and sometimes they did them all wrong. They was always very willing, certainly. All the while I was puzzling how I was to get the confounded business settled. Every night before the dawn I used to march out in full rig and go off to a place where I could see the channel in which the *Ocean Pioneer* lay sunk, and once even, one moonlight night, I tried to walk out to her, but the weeds and rocks and dark clean beat me. I didn't get back till full day, and then I found all those silly niggers out on the beach praying their sea god to return to them. I was that vexed and tired, messing and tumbling about, and coming up and going down again. I could have punched their silly heads all round when they started rejoicing. I'm hanged if I like so much ceremony.

"And then came the missionary That missionary! It was in the afternoon and I was sittin in state in my outer temple place, sitting on that old black stone of theirs when he came I heard a row outside and jabbering, and then his voice speaking to an interpreter 'They worship stocks and stones' he said, and I knew what was up, in a flash I had one of my windows out for comfort and I sang out straight away on the spot of the moment 'Stocks and stones!' I says 'You come inside, I said, 'and I'll punch your blooming head' There was a kind of silence and more jabbering and in he came Bible in hand, after the manner of them—a little sandy chap in specks and a pith helmet I flatter myself that me sitting there in the shadows with my copper head and my big goggles struck him a bit of a heap at first 'Well' I says 'how's the trade in calico?' for I don't hold with missionaries

"I had a lark with that missionary He was a raw hand and quite outclassed with a man like me He gasped out who was I, and I told him to read the inscription at my feet if he wanted to know Down he goes to read, and his interpreter, being of course as superstitious as any of them took it as an act of worship and plumped down like a shot All my people gave a howl of triumph, and there wasn't any more business to be done in my village after that journey, not by the likes of him

"But of course, I was a fool to choke him off like that If I'd had any sense I should have told him straight away of the treasure and taken him into Co I've no doubt he'd have come into Co A child with a few hours to think it over, could have seen the connection between my diving dress and the loss of the *Ocean Pioneer* A week after he left I went out one morning and saw the *Motherhood* the salver's ship from Starr Race, towing up the channel and sounding The whole blessed game was up and all my trouble thrown away Gummy? How wild I felt!

And giving it in that stinking silly dress! Four months!'

The sunburnt man's story degenerated again "Think of it," he said when he emerged to linguistic purity once more "Forty thousand pounds' worth of gold"

"*Did the little missionary come back?*" I asked

"Oh yes? Bless him! And he pledged his reputation there was a man inside the god, and started out to see as much with tremendous ceremony But there wasn't—he got sold again I always did hate scenes and explanations and long before he came I was out of it all—going home to Banya along the coast, hiding in bushes by day and thieving food from the villages by night Only weapon, a spear No clothes, no money Nothing My face was my fortune as the saying is And just a squeak of eight thousand pounds of gold—fifth share But the natives cut up rusty, thank goodness, because they thought it was him had driven their luck away"



STORY THE EIGHTH

The New Accelerator

CERTAINLY, if ever a man found a guinea when [illegible]e was looking for a pin it is my good friend Professor [illegible]berne I have heard before of investigators over[illegible]ing the mark, but never quite to the extent that he has done He has really, this time at any rate, with[illegible] any touch of exaggeration in the phrase, found [illegible]

[illegible]

days I have tasted the stuff now several times and I cannot do better than describe the effect the thing had on me That there are astonishing experiences in store for all in search of new sensations will become apparent enough

Professor Gibberne as many people know, is my neighbour in Folkestone Unless my memory plays me a trick, his portrait at various ages has already appeared in *The Strand Magazine*—I think late in 1899, but I am unable to look it up because I have lent that volume to some one who has never sent it back *The reader* may, p[illegible]aps, recall the high forehead and the singularly

long black eyebrows that give such a Mephistophelian touch to his face He occupies one of those pleasant detached houses in the mixed style that make the western end of the Upper Sandgate Road so interesting His is the one with the Flemish gables and the Moorish portico, and it is in the room with the mullioned bay window that he works when he is down here, and in which of an evening we have so often smoked and talked together He is a mighty jester, but, besides he likes to talk to me about his work, he is one of those men who find a help and stimulus in talking, and so I have been able to follow the conception of the New Accelerator right up from a very early stage Of course, the greater portion of his experimental work is not done in Folkestone, but in Gower Street, in the fine new laboratory next to the hospital that he has been the first to use

As everyone knows, or at least as all intelligent people know, the special department in which Gibberne has gained so great and deserved a reputation among physiologists is the action of drugs upon the nervous system Upon soporifics, sedatives, and anæsthetics he is, I am told, unequalled He is also a chemist of considerable eminence and I suppose in the subtle and complex jungle of riddles that centres about the ganglion cell and the axis fibre there are little cleared places of his making glades of illumination, that, until he sees fit to publish his results are inaccessible to every other living man And in the last few years he has been particularly assiduous upon this question of nervous stimulants, and already, before the discovery of the New Accelerator, very successful with them Medical science has to thank him for at least three distinct and absolutely safe invigorators of unrivalled value to practising men In cases of exhaustion the preparation known as Gibberne's B Syrup has, I suppose, saved more lives already than any lifeboat round the coast

"But none of these things begin to satisfy me yet,"

he told me nearly a year ago "Either they increase the central energy without affecting the nerves or they simply increase the available energy by lowering the nervous conductivity, and all of them are unequal and local in their operation One wakes up the heart and viscera and leaves the brain stupefied, one gets at the brain champagne fashion and does nothing good for the solar plexus and what I want—and what, if it's an earthly possibility, I mean to have—is a stimulant that stimulates all round that wakes you up for a time from the crown of your head to the tip of your great toe, and makes you go two—or even three to everybody else's one Eh? That's the thing I'm after"

"It would tire a man," I said

"Not a doubt of it And you'd eat double or treble—and all that But just think what the thing would mean Imagine yourself with a little phial like this"—he held up a bottle of green glass and marked his points with it—"and in this precious phial is the power to think twice as fast move twice as quickly, do twice as much work in a given time as you could otherwise do"

"But is such a thing possible?"

"I believe so If it isn't, I've wasted my time for a year These various preparations of the hypophosphites, for example, seem to show that something of the sort Even if it was only one and a half times as fast it would do"

"It *would* do," I said

"If you were a statesman in a corner, for example, time rushing up against you, something urgent to be done eh?"

"He could dose his private secretary," I said

"And gain—double time And think if *you* for example wanted to finish a book"

"Usually I said "I wish I'd never begun 'em"

"Or a doctor, driven to death wants to sit down and think out a case Or a barrister—or a man cramming for an examination."

"Worth a guinea a drop," said I, "and more—to men like that."

"And in a duel again," said Gibberne, "where it all depends on your quickness in pulling the trigger"

"Or in fencing," I echoed

"You see," said Gibberne, "if I get it as an all-round thing it will really do you no harm at all—except perhaps to an infinitesimal degree it brings you nearer old age You will just have lived twice to other people's once——"

"I suppose," I meditated, "in a duel—it would be fair?"

"*That's a question for the seconds,*" *said Gibberne*

I harked back further "And you really think such a thing *is* possible?" I said

"As possible," said Gibberne, and glanced at some thing that went throbbing by the window, "as a motor-bus As a matter of fact——"

He paused and smiled at me deeply, and tapped slowly on the edge of his desk with the green phial "I think I know the stuff Already I've got something coming" The nervous smile upon his face betrayed the gravity of his revelation He rarely talked of his actual experimental work unless things were very near the end "And it may be, it may be—I shouldn't be surprised—it may even do the thing at a greater rate than twice"

"It will be rather a big thing," I hazarded

"It will be, I think, rather a big thing"

But I don't think he quite knew what a big thing it was to be, for all that

I remember we had several subsequent talks about the stuff "The New Accelerator" he called it, and his tone about it grew more confident on each occasion Sometimes he talked nervously of unexpected physiological results its use might have and then he would get a bit unhappy at others he was frankly mercenary, and we debated long and anxiously how the preparation

might be turned to commercial account "It's a good thing" said Gibberne, "a tremendous thing I know I'm giving the world something, and I think it only reasonable we should expect the world to pay The dignity of science is all very well, but I think somehow I must have the monopoly of the stuff for, say, ten years I don't see why *all* the fun in life should go to the dealers in ham"

My own interest in the coming drug certainly did not wane in the time I have always had a queer twist towards metaphysics in my mind I have always been given to paradoxes about space and time, and it seemed to me that Gibberne was really preparing no less than the absolute acceleration of life Suppose a man repeatedly dosed with such a preparation he would live an active and record life indeed, but he would be an adult at eleven, middle aged at twenty five, and by thirty well on the road to senile decay It seemed to me that so far Gibberne was only going to do for any one who took his drug exactly what Nature has done for the Jews and Orientals, who are men in their teens and aged by fifty, and quicker in thought and act than we are all the time The marvel of drugs has always been great to my mind you can madden a man, calm a man make him incredibly strong and alert or a helpless log quicken this passion and allay that, all by means of drugs and here was a new miracle to be added to this strange armoury of phials the doctors use! But Gibberne was far too eager upon his technical points *to* enter very keenly into my aspect of the question

It was the 7th or 8th of August when he told me the distillation that would decide his failure or success for a time was going forward as we talked and it was on the 10th that he told me the thing was done and the New Accelerator a tangible reality in the world I met him as I was going up the Sandgate Hill towards Folkestone—I think I was going to get my hair cut; and he came hurrying down to meet me—I suppose he

was coming to my house to tell me at once of his success I remember that his eyes were unusually bright and his face flushed, and I noted even then the swift alacrity of his step

"It's done," he cried, and gripped my hand speaking very fast, "it's more than done Come up to my house and see"

"Really?"

"Really!" he shouted "Incredibly! Come up and see"

"And it does—twice?"

"It does more, much more It scares me Come up and see the stuff Taste it! Try it! It's the most amazing stuff on earth He gripped my arm and walking at such a pace that he forced me into a trot, went shouting with me up the hill A whole charabancful of people turned and stared at us in unison after the manner of people in charabancs It was one of those hot, clear days that Folkestone sees so much of, every colour incredibly bright and every outline hard There was a breeze, of course, but not so much breeze as sufficed under these conditions to keep me cool and dry I panted for mercy

"I'm not walking fast, am I?" cried Gibberne, and slackened his pace to a quick march

"You've been taking some of this stuff," I puffed

"No," he said "At the utmost a drop of water that stood in a beaker from which I had washed out the last traces of the stuff I took some last night, you know But that is ancient history, now"

"And it goes twice?" I said, nearing his doorway in a grateful perspiration

"It goes a thousand times, many thousand times!" cried Gibberne, with a dramatic gesture, flinging open his Early English carved oak gate

"Phew!" said I, and followed him to the door

"I don't know how many times it goes," he said, with his latch key in his hand

"And you——"

"It throws all sorts of light on nervous physiology, it kicks the theory of vision into a perfectly new shape! Heaven knows how many thousand times We'll try all that after—— The thing is to try the stuff now"

"Try the stuff?" I said, as we went along the passage

"Rather,' said Gibberne turning on me in his study "There it is in that little green phial there! Unless you happen to be afraid?"

I am a careful man by nature, and only theoretically adventurous I *was* afraid But on the other hand there is pride

"Well,' I haggled "You say you've tried it?"

"I ve tried it,' he said, "and I don t look hurt by it, do I? I don't even look livery and I *feel*——"

I sat down "Give me the potion," I said "If the worst comes to the worst it will save having my hair cut and that I think is one of the most hateful duties of a civilised man How do you take the mixture?"

"With water," said Gibberne, whacking down a carafe

He stood up in front of his desk and regarded me in his easy chair his manner was suddenly affected by a touch of the Harley Street specialist "It's rum stuff, you know," he said

I made a gesture with my hand

"I must warn you in the first place as soon as you've got it down to shut your eyes, and open them very cautiously in a minute or so s time One still sees The sense of vision is a question of length of vibration, and not of multitude of impacts but there's a kind of shock to the retina, a nasty giddy confusion just at the time if the eyes are open keep 'em shut"

"Shut" I said "Good!"

"And the next thing is, keep still Don't begin to whack about You may fetch something a nasty rap if you do Remember you will be going several thousand

times faster than you ever did before, heart, lungs, muscles brain—everything—and you will hit hard without knowing it You won't know it, you know You'll feel just as you do now Only everything in the world will seem to be going ever so many thousand times slower than it ever went before That's what makes it so deuced queer"

"Lor'" I said "And you mean——"

"You'll see, said he, and took up a measure He glanced at the material on his desk "Glasses," he said, "water All here Mustn't take too much for the first attempt"

The little phial glucked out its precious contents "Don't forget what I told you," he said, turning the contents of the measure into a glass in the manner of an Italian waiter measuring whisky "Sit with the eyes tightly shut and in absolute stillness for two minutes," he said "Then you will hear me speak"

He added an inch or so of water to the dose in each glass

"By the bye," he said, "don't put your glass down Keep it in your hand and rest your hand on your knee Yes—so And now——"

He raised his glass

"The New Accelerator," I said

"The New Accelerator," he answered, and we touched glasses and drank, and instantly I closed my eyes

You know that blank non existence into which one *drops when one has taken "gas" For an indefinite* interval it was like that Then I heard Gibberne telling me to wake up, and I stirred and opened my eyes There he stood as he had been standing, glass still in hand It was empty, that was all the difference

"Well?" said I

"Nothing out of the way?"

"Nothing A slight feeling of exhilaration, perhaps Nothing more"

' S unds?"

Things are still," I said "By Jove! yes! They a e t ll Except the sort of faint pat, patter, like rain l g on different things What is it?"

Analysed sounds,' I think he said, but I am n t s re He glanced at the window "Have you ever n a curtain before a window fixed in that way efore?"

I followed his eyes, and there was the end of the curtain frozen, as it were, corner high, in the act of flapping briskly in the breeze

No' said I, "that's odd'

"And here," he said and opened the hand that held the glass Naturally I winced, expecting the glass to smash But so far from smashing it did not even seem to stir it hung in mid air—motionless "Roughly speaking," said Gibberne, "an object in these latitudes falls 16 feet in the first second This glass is falling 16 feet in a second now Only, you see, it hasn't been falling yet for the hundredth part of a second That gives you some idea of the pace of my Accelerator" And he waved his hand round and round, over and under the slowly sinking glass Finally he took it b the bottom

on the table

"That se

gingerly to raise myself from my chair I felt perfect well very light and comfortable, and quite confident in my mind I was going fast all over My heart, for example was beating a thousand times a second, but that caused me no discomfort at all I looked out of the window An immovable cyclist, head down and with a frozen puff of dust behind his driving wheel scorched to overtake a galloping charabanc that did not stir I gaped in amazement at this incredible specta le "Gibberne' I cried, "how long will this confounded stuff last?"

"Heaven knows!" he answered "Last time I took

it I went to bed and slept it off I tell you, I was frightened It must have laste l some minutes, I think —it seemed like hours But after a bit it slows down rather suddenly, I believe"

I was proud to observe that I did not feel frightened —I suppose because there were two of us "Why shouldn't we go out?" I asked

"Why not?"

"They'll see us"

"Not they Goodness, no! Why, we shall be going a thousand times faster than the quickest conjuring trick that was ever done Come along! Which way shall we go? Window, or door?"

And out by the window we went

Assuredly of all the strange experiences that I have ever had, or imagined, or read of other people having or imagining that little raid I made with Gibberne on the Folkestone Leas, under the influence of the New Accelerator, was the strangest and maddest of all We went out by his gate into the road, and there we made a minute examination of the statuesque passing traffic The tops of the wheels and some of the legs of the horses of this charabanc, the end of the whip lash and the lower jaw of the conductor—who was just beginning to yawn—were perceptibly in motion but all the rest of the lumbering con e ance seemed still And quite noiseless except for a faint rattling that came from one man's throat! And as parts of this frozen edifice there were a driver, you know, and a conductor, and eleven people! The effect as we walked about the thing began by being madly queer and ended by being—disagreeable There they were, people like ourselves and yet not like oursel es frozen in careless attitudes, caught in mid gesture A girl and a man smiled at one another, a leering smile that threatened to last for evermore, a woman in a floppy capelline rested her arm on the rail and stared at Gibberne's house with the unwinking stare of eternity, a man stroked his moustache like a

figure of wax and another stretched a tiresome stiff hand with extended fingers towards his loosened hat We stared at them, we laughed at them, we made faces at them and then a sort of disgust of them came upon us, and we turned away and walked round in front of the cyclist towards the Leas

"G dness!" cried Gibberne, suddenly, "look there

He pointed, and there at the tip of his finger and sli ing down the air with wings flapping slowly and at the speed of a exceptionally languid snail—was a bee

And so we came out upon the Leas There the thing seemed madder than ever The band was playing in the upper stand though all the sound it made for us was a low pitched wheezy rattle, a sort of prolonged last sigh that passed at times into a sound like the slow, muffled ticking of some monstrous clock Frozen people stood erect, strange, silent, self conscious lo king dum mies hung unstably in mid stride, promenading upon the grass I passed close to a poo lle dog suspended in the act of leaping and watched the slow movement of his legs as he sank to earth "Lord, look *here!*" cried Gibberne and we halted for a moment before a magnificent person in white faint striped flannels, white shoes and a Panama hat who turned back to wink at two gaily dressed la lies he had passed A wink, studied with such leisurely deliberation as we could afford, is an unattractive thing It loses any quality of alert gaiety, and one remarks that the winking eye does not com pletely close that un ler its drooping lid appears the lower edge of an eyeball and a line of wh te "Heaven give me memory," said I, "and I will never wink again"

"Or smile" said Gibberne, with his eye on the lady's answering teeth

"It s infernally hot, somehow," said I "Let s go slower"

"Oh, come along!" said Gibberne

We picked our way among the bath chairs in the path Many of the people sitting in the chairs seemed almost natural in their passive poses, but the contorted scarlet of the bandsmen was not a restful thing to see A purple faced gentleman was frozen in the midst of a violent struggle to refold his newspaper against the wind there were many evidences that all these people in their sluggish way were exposed to a considerable breeze, a breeze that had no existence so far as our sensations went We came out and walked a little way from the crowd and turned and regarded it To see all that multitude changed to a picture, smitten rigid, as it were, into the semblance of realistic wax, was impossibly wonderful It was absurd, of course, but it filled me with an irrational an exultant sense of superior advantage Consider the wonder of it! All that I had said and thought and done since the stuff had begun to work in my veins had happened, so far as those people so far as the world in general went, in [illegible] "Th[illegible] I——"

"Lives next door to me" said Gibberne "Has a lapdog that yaps Gods! The temptation is strong!"

There is something very boyish and impulsive about Gibberne at times Before I could expostulate with him he had dashed forward snatched the unfortunate animal out of visible existence and was running violently with it towards the cliff of the Leas It was most extraordinary The little brute, you know, didn't bark or wriggle or make the slightest sign of vitality It kept quite stiffly in an attitude of somnolent repose, and Gibberne held it by the neck It was like running about with a dog of wood "Gibberne," I cried, "put it down!" Then I said something else "If you run like that, Gibberne," I cried, 'you'll set your clothes on fire Your linen trousers are going brown as it is!"

He clapped his hand on his thigh and stood hesitating on the verge "Gibberne," I cried, coming up, "put it down This heat is too much! It's our running so Two or three miles a second! Friction of the air!"

"What?" he said, glancing at the dog

"Friction of the air," I shouted "Friction of the air Going too fast Like meteorites and things Too hot And Gibberne! Gibberne! I'm all over pricking and a sort of perspiration You can see people stirring [illegible] I believe the stuff's working off! Put that [illegible]"

"Eh?" he said

"It's working off," I repeated "We're too hot and the stuff's working off! I'm wet through"

He stared at me Then at the band, the wheezy [illegible]tle of whose performance was certainly going faster Then with a tremendous sweep of the arm he hurled the dog away from him and it went spinning upward still inanimate and hung at last over the grouped parasols of a knot of chattering people Gibberne was gripping my elbow "*By Jove!*" he cried "I believe it is! A sort of hot pricking and—yes That man's moving his pocket handkerchief! Perceptibly We must get out of this sharp"

But we could not get out of it sharply enough Luckily perhaps! For we might have run, and if we had run we should, I believe, have burst into flames Almost certainly we should have burst into *flames!* You know we had neither of us thought of that But before we could even begin to run the action of the drug had ceased It was the business of a minute fraction of a second The effect of the New Accelerator passed like the drawing of a curtain, vanished in the movement of a hand I heard Gibberne's voice *in* infinite alarm "Sit down," he said, and flop, *down* upon the turf at the edge of the Leas I sat—scorching as I sat There is a patch of burnt grass there *still where* I sat down The whole stagnation seemed to wake up as

I did so, the disarticulated vibration of the band rushed together into a blast of music, the promenaders put their feet down and walked their ways, the papers and flags began flapping smiles passed into words, the winker finished his wink and went on his way complacently, and all the seated people moved and spoke

The whole world had come alive again, was going as fast as we were, or rather we were going no faster than the rest of the world It was like slowing down as one comes into a railway station Everything seemed to spin round for a second or two, I had the most transient feeling of nausea, and that was all And the little dog which had seemed to hang for a moment when the force of Gibberne's arm was expended fell with a swift acceleration clean through a lady's parasol!

That was the saving of us Unless it was for one corpulent old gentleman in a bath-chair, who certainly did start at the sight of us and afterwards regarded us at intervals with a darkly suspicious eye, and finally, I believe, said something to his nurse about us, I doubt if a solitary person remarked our sudden appearance among them Plop! We must have appeared abruptly We ceased to smoulder almost at once, though the turf beneath me was uncomfortably hot The attention of everyone—including even the Amusements' Association band, which on this occasion, for the only time in its history, got out of tune—was arrested by the amazing fact, and the still more amazing yapping and uproar caused by the fact, that a respectable, over fed lapdog sleeping quietly to the east of the bandstand should suddenly fall through the parasol of a lady on the west—in a slightly singed condition due to the extreme velocity of its movements through the air In these absurd days, too, when we are all trying to be as psychic and silly and superstitious as possible! People got up and trod on other people, chairs were overturned, the Leas policeman ran How the matter settled itself I do not know—we were much too anxious to dis-

entangle ourselves from the affair and get out of range of the eye of the old gentleman in the bath chair to make minute inquiries As soon as we were sufficiently cool and sufficiently recovered from our giddiness and nausea and confusion of mind to do so we stood up and skirting the crowd directed our steps back along the road below the Metropole towards Gibberne's house But amidst the din I heard very distinctly the gentleman who had been sitting beside the lady of the ruptured sunshade using quite unjustifiable threats and language to one of those chair attendants who have "Inspector" written on their caps "If you didn't throw the dog,' he said, "who *did*?'

The sudden return of movement and familiar noises, and our natural anxiety about ourselves (our clothes were still dreadfully hot, and the fronts of the thighs of Gibberne's white trousers were scorched a drabbish brown), prevented the minute observations I should have liked to make on all these things Indeed, I really made no observations of any scientific value on that return The bee, of course, had gone I looked for that cyclist, but he was already out of sight as we came into the Upper Sandgate Road or hidden from us by traffic, the charabanc, however, with its people now all alive and stirring was clattering along at a spanking pace almost abreast of the nearer church

We noted, however, that the window sill on which we had stepped in getting out of the house was slightly singed, and that the impressions of our feet on the gravel of the path were unusually deep

So it was I had my first experience of the New Accelerator Practically we had been running about and saying and doing all sorts of things in the space of a second or so of time We had lived half an hour while the band had played, perhaps, two bars But the effect it had upon us was that the whole world had stopped for our convenient inspection Considering all

things, and particularly considering our rashness in venturing out of the house, the experience might certainly have been much more disagreeable than it was. It showed, no doubt, that Gibberne has still much to learn before his preparation is a manageable convenience, but its practicability it certainly demonstrated beyond all cavil.

Since that adventure he has been steadily bringing its use under control, and I have several times, and without the slightest bad result, taken measured doses under his direction, though I must confess I have not yet ventured abroad again while under its influence. I may mention, for example, that this story has been written at one sitting and without interruption, except for the nibbling of some chocolate, by its means. I began at 6.25, and my watch is now very nearly at the minute past the half-hour. The convenience of securing a long, uninterrupted spell of work in the midst of a day full of engagements cannot be exaggerated. Gibberne is now working at the quantitative handling of his preparation, with especial reference to its distinctive effects upon different types of constitution. He then hopes to find a Retarder with which to dilute its present rather excessive potency. The Retarder will, of course, have the reverse effect to the Accelerator, used alone it should enable the patient to spread a few seconds over many hours of ordinary time, and so to maintain an apathetic inaction, a glacierlike absence of alacrity, amidst the most animated or irritating surroundings. The two things together must necessarily work an entire revolution in civilised existence. It is the beginning of our escape from that Time Garment of which Carlyle speaks. While this Accelerator will enable us to concentrate ourselves with tremendous impact upon any moment or occasion that demands our utmost sense and vigour, the Retarder will enable us to pass in passive tranquillity through infinite hardship and tedium. Perhaps I am a little optimistic about the Retarder,

which has indeed still to be discovered, but about the Accelerator there is no possible sort of doubt whatever Its appearance upon the market in a convenient, controllable and assimilable form is a matter of the next few months It will be obtainable of all chemists and druggists in small green bottles, at a high but, considering its extraordinary qualities, by no means excessive price Gibberne's Nervous Accelerator it will be called, and he hopes to be able to supply it in three strengths: one in 200 one in 900, and one in 2000, distinguished by yellow pink, and white labels respectively

No doubt its use renders a great number of very extraordinary things possible, for, of course, the most remarkable and, possibly, even criminal proceedings may be effected with impunity by thus dodging, as it were into the interstices of time Like all potent preparations it will be liable to abuse We have, however, discussed this aspect of the question very thoroughly, and we have decided that this is purely a matter of medical jurisprudence and altogether outside our province We shall manufacture and sell the Accelerator, and, as for the consequences—we shall see



STORY THE NINTH

Mr Ledbetter's Vacation

MY friend, Mr Ledbetter, is a round faced little man, whose natural mildness of eye is gigantically exaggerated when you catch the beam through his glasses, and whose deep, deliberate voice irritates irritable people A certain elaborate clearness of enunciation has come with him to his present vicarage from his scholastic days, an elaborate clearness of enunciation and a certain nervous determination to be firm and correct upon all issues important and unimportant alike He is a sacerdotalist and a chess player, and suspected by many of the secret practice of the higher mathematics—creditable rather than interesting things His conversation is copious and given much to needless detail By many, indeed, his intercourse is condemned, to put it plainly, as "boring" and such have even done me the compliment to wonder why I countenance him But, on the other hand there is a large faction who marvel at his countenancing such a dishevelled, discreditable acquaintance as myself Few appear to regard our friendship with equanimity But that is because they

do not know of the link that binds us, of my amiable connection *via* Jamaica with Mr Ledbetter's past.

About that past he displays an anxious modesty. "I do not know *what* I should do if it became known," he says, and repeats, impressively, "I do not know *what* I shall do." As a matter of fact, I doubt if he would do anything except get very red about the ears. But that will appear later; nor will I tell here of our first encounter since, as a general rule—though I am prone to break it—the end of a story should come after, rather than before, the beginning. And the beginning of the story goes a long way back; indeed, it is now nearly twenty years since Fate, by a series of complicated and startling manœuvres, brought Mr Ledbetter, so to speak, into my hands.

In those days I was living in Jamaica, and Mr Ledbetter was a schoolmaster in England. He was in orders, and already recognisably the same man that he is to-day: the same rotundity of visage, the same or similar glasses, and the same faint shadow of surprise in his resting expression. He was, of course, dishevelled when I saw him, and his collar less of a collar than a wet bandage, and that may have helped to bridge the natural gulf between us—but of that, as I say, later.

The business began at Hithergate on Sea, and simultaneously with Mr Ledbetter's summer vacation. Thither he came for a greatly needed rest, with a bright brown portmanteau marked "F. W. L.," a new white and black straw hat, and two pairs of white flannel trousers. He was naturally exhilarated at his release from school—for he was not very fond of the boys he taught. After dinner he fell into a discussion with a talkative person established in the boarding house to which, acting on the advice of his aunt, he had resorted. This talkative person was the only other man in the house. Their discussion concerned the melancholy disappearance of wonder and adventure in these latter days, his prevalence of globe trotting, the abolition of dis-

tance by steam and electricity, the vulgarity of advertisement, the degradation of men by civilisation, and many such things. *Particularly* was the talkative person eloquent on the decay of human courage through security, a security Mr Ledbetter rather thoughtlessly joined him in deploring. Mr Ledbetter, in the first delight of emancipation from "duty," and being anxious, perhaps, to establish a reputation for manly conviviality, partook, rather more freely than was advisable, of the excellent whisky the talkative person produced. But he did not become intoxicated, he insists.

He was simply eloquent beyond his sober wont, and with the finer edge gone from his judgment. And after that long talk of the brave old days that were past for ever, he went out into moonlit Hithergate alone and up the cliff road where the villas cluster together.

He had bewailed, and now as he walked up the silent road he still bewailed, the fate that had called him to such an uneventful life as a pedagogue's. What a prosaic existence he led, so stagnant, so colourless! Secure, methodical, year in year out, what call was there for bravery? He thought enviously of those roving, mediæval days, so near and so remote, of quests and spies and condottieri and many a risky blade-drawing business. And suddenly came a doubt, a strange doubt, springing out of some chance thought of tortures, and destructive altogether of the position he had assumed that evening.

Was he—Mr Ledbetter—really, after all, so brave as he assumed? Would he really be so pleased to have railways, policemen, and security vanish suddenly from the earth?

The talkative man had spoken enviously of crime. "The burglar," he said, "is the only true adventurer left on earth. Think of his singlehanded fight—against the whole civilised world!" And Mr Ledbetter had echoed his envy. "They *do* have some fun out of life," Mr Ledbetter had said. "And about the only

stillness of the night was unbroken. "Crime," he whispered "crime," and scrambled softly and swiftly over the sill into the house. His feet fell noiselessly on a mat of skin. He was a burglar indeed!

He crouched for a time, all ears and peering eyes. Outside was a scampering and rustling, and for a moment he repented of his enterprise. A short squeal, a spitting, and a rush into silence, spoke reassuringly of cats. His courage grew. He stood up. Everyone was abed, it seemed. So easy is it to commit a burglary, if one is so minded. He was glad he had put it to the test. He determined to take some petty trophy, just to prove his freedom from any abject fear of the law, and depart the way he had come.

He peered about him, and suddenly the critical spirit arose again. Burglars did far more than such mere elementary entrance as this: they went into rooms, they forced safes. Well—he was not afraid. He could not force safes, because that would be a stupid want of consideration for his hosts. But he would go into rooms—he would go upstairs. More: he told himself that he was perfectly secure, an empty house could not be more reassuringly still. He had to clench his hands, nevertheless, and summon all his resolution before he began very softly to ascend the dim staircase, pausing for several seconds between each step. Above was a square landing with one open and several closed doors, and all the house was still. For a moment he stood wondering what would happen if some sleeper woke suddenly and emerged. The open door showed a moonlit bedroom, the coverlet white and undisturbed. Into this room he crept in three interminable minutes and took a piece of soap for his plunder—his trophy. He turned to descend even more softly than he had ascended. It was as easy as— Hist!

Footsteps! On the gravel outside the house—and then the noise of a latchkey, the yawn and bang of a door, and the spitting of a match in the hall below.

Mr Ledbetter stood petrified by the sudden discovery of the folly upon which he had come "How on earth am I to get out of this?" said Mr Ledbetter

The hall grew bright with a candle flame, some heavy object bumped against the umbrella stand, and feet were ascending the staircase In a flash Mr Ledbetter realised that his retreat was closed He stood for a moment, a pitiful figure of penitent confusion "My goodness! What a *fool* I have been!" he whispered, and then darted swiftly across the shadowy landing into the empty bedroom from which he had just come He stood listening—quivering The footsteps reached the first floor landing

Horrible thought! This was possibly the late comer's room! Not a moment was to be lost! Mr Ledbetter stooped beside the bed thanked Heaven for a valance, and crawled within its protection not ten seconds too soon He became motionless on hands and knees The advancing candle light appeared through the thinner stitches of the fabric, the shadows ran wildly about and became rigid as the candle was put down

"Lord, what a day!" said the newcomer, blowing noisily, and it seemed he deposited some heavy burthen on what Mr Ledbetter, judging by the feet, decided to be a writing table The unseen then went to the door and locked it, examined the fastenings of the windows carefully and pulled down the blinds, and returning sat down upon the bed with startling ponderosity

"*What* a day!" he said "Good Lord!" and blew again, and Mr Ledbetter inclined to believe that the person was mopping his face His boots were good stout boots, the shadows of his legs upon the valance suggested a formidable stoutness of aspect After a time he removed some upper garments—a coat and waistcoat Mr Ledbetter inferred—and casting them over the rail of the bed remained breathing less noisily, and as it seemed cooling from a considerable temperature At intervals he muttered to himself, and once he

laughed softly And Mr Ledbetter muttered to himself but he did not laugh "Of all the foolish things," said Mr Ledbetter "What on earth am I to do now?"

His outlook was necessarily limited The minute apertures between the stitches of the fabric of the valance admitted a certain amount of light, but permitted no peeping The shadows upon this curtain, for those sharply defined legs, were enigmatical and intermingled confusingly with the florid patterning of the chintz Beneath the edge of the valance a strip of carpet was visible, and, by cautiously depressing his eye, Mr Ledbetter found that this strip broadened until the whole area of the floor came into view The carpet was a luxurious one, the room spacious, and, to judge by the castors and so forth of the furniture, well equipped

What he should do he found it difficult to imagine To wait until this person had gone to bed and then when he seemed to be sleeping, to creep to the door, unlock it, and bolt headlong for that balcony seemed the only possible thing to do Would it be possible to jump from the balcony? The danger of it! When he thought of the chances against him, Mr Ledbetter despaired He was within an ace of thrusting forth his head beside the gentleman's legs, coughing if necessary to attract his attention, and then, smiling, apologising and explaining his unfortunate intrusion by a few well chosen sentences But he found these sentences hard to choose "No doubt, sir, my appearance is peculiar," or, "I trust, sir, you will pardon my somewhat ambiguous appearance from beneath you," was about as much as he could get

Grave possibilities forced themselves on his attention Suppose they did not believe him, what would they do to him? Would his unblemished high character count for nothing? Technically he was a burglar, beyond dispute Following on this train of thought, he was

composing a lucid apology for "this technical crime I have committed," to be delivered before sentence in the dock, when the stout gentleman got up and began walking about the room He locked and unlocked drawers, and Mr Ledbetter had a transient hope that he might be undressing But, no! He seated himself at the writing table, and began to write and then tear up documents Presently the smell of burning cream laid paper mingled with the odour of cigars in Mr Ledbetter's nostrils

"The position I had assumed," said Mr Ledbetter when he told me of these things, "was in many respects an ill advised one A transverse bar beneath the bed depressed my head unduly, and threw a disproportionate share of my weight upon my hands After a time, I experienced what is called, I believe, a crick in the neck The pressure of my hands on the coarsely stitched carpet speedily became painful My knees, too, were painful, my trousers being drawn tightly over them At that time I wore rather higher collars than I do now—two and a half inches, in fact—and I discovered what I had not remarked before, that the edge of the one I wore was frayed slightly under the chin But much worse than these things was an itching of my face, which I could only relieve by violent grimacing—I tried to raise my hand, but the rustle of the sleeve alarmed me After a time I had to desist from this relief also, because—happily in time—I discovered that my facial contortions were shifting my glasses down my nose Their fall would, of course, have exposed me, and as it was they came to rest in an oblique position of by no means stable equilibrium In addition I had a slight cold, and an intermittent desire to sneeze or sniff caused me inconvenience In fact, quite apart from the extreme anxiety of my position, my physical discomfort became in a short time very considerable indeed But I had to stay there motionless, nevertheless"

After an interminable time, there began a chinking

sound This deepened into a rhythm chink chink, chink—twenty five chinks—a rap on the writing table, and a grunt from the owner of the stout legs It dawned upon Mr Ledbetter that this chinking was the chinking of gold He became incredulously curious as it went on His curiosity grew Already, if that was the case, this extraordinary man must have counted some hundreds of pounds At last Mr Ledbetter could resist it no longer, and he began very cautiously to fold his arms and lower his head to the level of the floor, in the hope of peeping under the valance He moved his feet and one made a slight scraping on the floor Suddenly the chinking ceased Mr Ledbetter became rigid After a while the chinking was resumed Then it ceased again, and everything was still, except Mr Ledbetter's heart—that organ seemed to him to be beating like a drum

The stillness continued Mr Ledbetter's head was now on the floor and he could see the stout legs as far as the shins They were quite still The feet were resting on the toes and drawn back, as it seemed, under the chair of the owner Everything was quite still, everything continued still A wild hope came to Mr Ledbetter that the unknown was in a fit or suddenly dead, with his head upon the writing table

The stillness continued What had happened? The desire to peep became irresistible Very cautiously Mr Ledbetter shifted his hand forward, projected a pioneer finger, and began to lift the valance immediately next his eye Nothing broke the stillness He saw now the stranger's knees, saw the back of the writing-table, and then—he was staring at the barrel of a heavy revolver pointed over the writing table at his head

"Come out of that, you scoundrel!" said the voice of the stout gentleman in a tone of quiet concentration "Come out This side, and now None of your hanky panky—come right out now"

Mr Ledbetter came right out, a little reluctantly

perhaps, but without any hanky panky, and at once, even as he was told

"Kneel," said the stout gentleman "And hold up your hands"

The valance dropped again behind Mr Ledbetter, and he rose from all fours and held up his hands

'Dressed like a parson," said the stout gentleman "I'm blest if he isn't! A little chap, too! You *scoundrel!* What the deuce possessed you to come here to night? What the deuce possessed you to get under my bed?"

He did not appear to require an answer, but pro ceeded at once to several very objectionable remarks upon Mr Ledbetter's personal appearance He was not a very big man, but he looked strong to Mr Led better he was as stout as his legs had promised, he had rather delicately-chiselled small features distributed over a considerable area of whitish face, and quite a number of chins And the note of his voice had a sort of whispering undertone

"What the deuce, I say, possessed you to get under my bed?"

Mr Ledbetter, by an effort, smiled a wan, pro pitiatory smile He coughed "I can quite under stand——" he said

"Why! What on earth ? It's *soap!* No!—you scoundrel Don't you move that hand"

"It's soap," said Mr Ledbetter "From your wash stand No doubt if——"

"Don't talk," said the stout man "I see it's soap Of all incredible things"

"If I might explain——"

"Don't explain It's sure to be a lie, and there' no time for explanations What was I going to ask you? Ah! Have you any mates?"

"In a few minutes, if you——"

"Have you any mates? Curse you If you start any soapy palaver I'll shoot Have you any mates?"

"No," said Mr Ledbetter

"I suppose it's a lie," said the stout man "But you'll pay for it if it is Why the deuce didn't you floor me when I came upstairs? You won't get a chance to now, anyhow Fancy getting under the bed! I reckon it's a fair cop, anyhow, so far as you are concerned"

"I don't see how I could prove an *alibi*" remarked Mr Ledbetter trying to show by his conversation that he was an educated man There was a pause Mr Ledbetter perceived that on a chair beside his captor was a large black bag on a heap of crumpled papers, and that there were torn and burnt papers on the table And in front of these, and arranged methodically along the edge were rows and rows of little yellow rouleaux —a hundred times more gold than Mr Ledbetter had seen in all his life before The light of two candles, in silver candlesticks, fell upon these The pause continued "It is rather fatiguing holding up my hands like this" said Mr Ledbetter, with a deprecatory smile

"That's all right" said the fat man "But what to do with you I don't exactly know"

"I know my position is ambiguous"

"Lord!" said the fat man, "ambiguous! And goes about with his own soap, and wears a thundering great clerical collar! You *are* a blooming burglar, you are—if ever there was one!"

"To be strictly accurate," said Mr Ledbetter, and suddenly his glasses slipped off and clattered against his vest buttons

The fat man changed countenance a flash of savage resolution crossed his face, and something in the revolver clicked He put his other hand to the weapon And then he looked at Mr Ledbetter, and his eye went down to the dropped *pince nez*

"Full cock now, anyhow," said the fat man, after a pause, and his breath seemed to catch "But I'll tell you, you've never been so near death before *Lord!*

I'm almost glad If it hadn't been that the revolver wasn't cocked, you d be lying dead there now "

Mr Ledbetter said nothing, but he felt that the room was swaying

"A miss is as good as a mile It's lucky for both of us it wasn't Lord!" He blew noisily "There's no need for you to go pale green for a little thing like that"

"I can assure you, sir——" said Mr Ledbetter, with an effort

"There's only one thing to do If I call in the police, I'm bust—a little game I ve got on is bust That won't do If I tie you up and leave you—again, the thing may be out to morrow To morrow's Sunday, and Monday's Bank Holiday—I've counted on three clear days Shooting you's murder—and hanging, and besides, it will bust the whole blooming kernooze I m hanged if I can think what to do—I m hanged if I can"

"Will you permit me——"

"You gas as much as if you were a real parson, I'm blessed if you don't Of all the burglars you are the—— Well! No—I *won t* permit you There isn't time If you start off jawing again, I ll shoot right in your stomach See? But I know now—I know now! What we re going to do first my man, is an examination for concealed arms—an examination for concealed arms And look here! When I tell you to do a thing, don't start off at a gabble—do it brisk"

And with many elaborate precautions and always pointing the pistol at Mr Ledbetter s head, the stout man stood him up and searched him for weapons "Why, you *are* a burglar!" he said "You re a perfect amateur You haven't even a pistol pocket in the back of your breeches No, you don t! Shut up, now"

So soon as the issue was decided, the stout man made Mr Ledbetter take off his coat and roll up his shirt

sleeves and, with the revolver at one ear, proceed with the packing his appearance had interrupted From the stout man's point of view that was evidently the only possible arrangement, for if he had packed, he would have had to put down the revolver So that even the gold on the table was handled by Mr Ledbetter This nocturnal packing was peculiar The stout man's idea was evidently to distribute the weight of the gold as [illegible]

rolls of £5 bank notes Each rouleau of £25 was wrapped by Mr Ledbetter in paper These rouleaux were then put neatly in cigar boxes and distributed between a tra elling trunk, a Gladstone bag, and a hat box About £600 went in a tobacco tin in a dressing bag £10 in gold and a number of £5 notes the stout man pocketed Occasionally he objurgated Mr Ledbetter's clumsiness, and urged him to hurry, and several times he appealed to Mr Ledbetter's watch for information

Mr Ledbetter strapped the trunk and bag, and returned the stout man the keys It was then ten minutes to twelve, and until the stroke of midnight the stout man made him sit on the Gladstone bag while he sat at a reasonably safe distance on the trunk and held the revolver handy and waited He appeared to be now in a less aggressive mood, and having watched Mr Ledbetter for some time, he offered a few remarks

"From your accent I judge you are a man of some education," he said, lighting a cigar "No—*don't* begin that explanation of yours I know it will be long winded from your face, and I am much too old a liar to be interested in other men's lying You are, I say, a person of education. You do well to dress as a curate Even among educated people you might pass as a curate"

"*I am* a curate," said Mr Ledbetter, "or, at *least*——"

"You are trying to be I know But you didn't ought to burgle You are not the man to burgle You are, if I may say it—the thing will have been pointed out to you before—a coward"

"Do you know," said Mr Ledbetter, trying to get a final opening, "it was that very question——"

The stout man waved him into silence

"You waste your education in burglary You should do one of two thin s Either you should forge or you should embezzle For my own part, I embezzle Yes, I embezzle What do you think a man could be doing with all this gold but that? Ah! Listen! Mid night! Ten Eleven Twelve There is something very impressive to me in that slow beating of the hours Time—space what mysteries they are! What mysteries It's time for us to be moving Stand up!"

And then kindly, but firmly, he induced Mr Led better to sling the dressing bag over his back by a string across his chest, to shoulder the trunk and, over ruling a gasping protest, to take the Gladstone bag in his dis [illegible]

[illegible]

assisting him at the turnings of the stairs

"The back door," he directed, and Mr Ledbetter staggered through a conservatory, leaving a wake of smashed flower pots behind him "Never mind the crockery," said the stout man "it's good for trade We wait here until a quarter past You can put those things down You have!"

Mr Ledbetter collapsed panting on the trunk "Last night," he gasped, "I was asleep in my little room, and I no more dreamt——"

"There's no need for you to incriminate yourself,"

said the stout gentleman, looking at the lock of the rev lver He began to hum Mr Ledbetter made to speak and though better of it

T ere presently came the sound of a bell, and Mr Ledbetter was taken to the back door and instructed to ope t A fair haired man in yachting costume entered At the sight of Mr Ledbetter he started violently and clapped his hand behind him Then he saw the stout man I ngham!" he cried, "who's this?"

On a little philanthropic do of mine—burglar I m try ng to reform Caught him under my bed just now He s all right He's a frightful ass He'll be usef l to carry some of our things"

The newcomer seemed inclined to resent Mr Ledbetter s presence at first, but the stout man reassured him

' He s quite alone There's not a gang in the world would own him No——! Don't start talking, for goo iness' sake"

They went out into the darkness of the garden, with the trunk st ll bowing Mr Ledbetter's shoulders The man in yachting costume walked in front with the Gladstone bag and a pistol, then came Mr Ledbetter like Atlas, Mr Bingham followed with the hat box, coat, and revolver as before The house was one of those that have their gardens right up to the cliff At the cliff was a steep wooden stairway, descending to a bathing tent dimly visible on the beach Below was a boat pulled up and a silent little man with a black face stood beside it "A few moments' explanation," said Mr Ledbetter, "I can assure you——" Somebody kicked h [illegible]

the [illegible]

call [illegible]

"burglar" all that night But they spoke in undertones so that the general public was happily unaware of his ignominy They hauled him aboard a yacht manned

by strange, unsympathetic Orientals, and partly they thrust him and partly he fell down a gangway into a noisome, dark place, where he was to remain many days—how many he does not know, beause he lost count among other things when he was sea-sick They fed him on biscuits and incomprehensible words, they gave him water to drink mixed with unwished for rum And there were cockroaches where they put him—night and day there were cockroaches, and in the night time there were rats The Orientals emptied his pockets and took his watch—but Mr Bingham being appealed to, took that himself And five or six times the five Lascars—if they were Lascars—and the Chinaman and the negro who constituted the crew fished him out and took him aft to Bingham and his friend to play crib bage and euchre and three handed whist, and to listen to their stories and boastings in an interested manner

Then these principals would talk to him as men talk to those who have lived a life of crime Explanations they would never permit, though they made it abun dantly clear to him that he was the rummiest burglar they had ever set eyes on They said as much again and again The fair man was of a taciturn disposition and irascible at play, but Mr Bingham, now that the evident anxiety of his departure from England was assuaged, displayed a vein of genial philosophy He enlarged upon the mystery of space and time, and quoted Kant and Hegel—or, at least, he said he did Several times Mr Ledbetter got as far as "My position under your bed, you know——" but then he always had to cut, or pass the whisky, or do some such intervening thing After his third failure, the fair man got quite to look for this opening and whenever Mr Ledbetter began after that he would roar with laughter and hit him violently on the back "Same old start, same old story, good old burglar!" the fair haired man would say

So Mr Ledbetter suffered for many days, twenty perhaps, and one evening he was taken, together with

some tinned provisions, over the side and put ashore on a rocky little island with a spring Mr Bingham came in the boat with him, giving him good advice all the way, and [illegible]

"I am [illegible]

"You [illegible] never make a burglar I'm glad you are beginning to see it In choosing a profession a man must study his temperament If you don't, sooner or later you will fail Compare myself, for example All my life I have been in banks—I have got on in banks I have even been a bank manager But was I happy? No Why wasn't I happy? Because it did not suit my temperament I am too adventurous—too versatile Practically I have thrown it over I do not suppose I shall ever manage a bank again They would be glad to get me, no doubt, but I have learnt the lesson of my temperament—at last No! I shall never manage a bank again

"Now, your temperament unfits you for crime—just as mine unfits me for respectability I know you better than I did, and now I do not even recommend forgery Go back to respectable courses, my man *Your* lay is the philanthropic lay—that is your lay With that voice—the Association for the Promotion of Snivelling among the Young—something in that line You think it over

"The island we are approaching has no name apparently—at least, there is none on the chart You might think out a name for it while you are there—while you are thinking about all these things It has quite drinkable water, I understand It is one of the Grenadines—one of the Windward Islands Yonder, dim and blue, are others of the Grenadines There are quantities of Grenadines, but the majority are out of sight I have often wondered what these islands are for—now, you see, I am wiser This one at least is for you Sooner or later some simple native will come along and

take you off Say what you like about us then—abuse us, if you like—we shan t care a solitary Grenadine! *And here—here is half a sovereign's worth of silver* Do not waste that in foolish dissipation when you return to civilisation Properly used, it may give you a fresh start in life And do not—— Don't beach her, you beggars, he can wade!—— Do not waste the precious solitude before you in foolish thoughts Properly used, it may be a turning point in your career Waste neither money nor time You will die rich I'm sorry, but I must ask you to carry your tucker to land in your arms No, it's not deep Curse that explanation of yours! There's not time No, no, no! I won't listen Overboard you go!"

And the falling night found Mr Ledbetter—the Mr [illegible]

[illegible]

He was picked up in the course of three days by a negro fisherman and taken to St Vincent's, and from St Vincent s he got, by the expenditure of his last coins to Kingston, in Jamaica And there he might have foundered Even nowadays he is not a man of affairs, and then he was a singularly helpless person He had not the remotest idea what he ought to do The only [illegible]

[illegible]

quite by chance It was close upon sunset, and I was walking out after my siesta on the road to Dunn s Battery, when I met him—I was rather bored and with a whole evening on my hands—luckily for him He was trudging dismally towards the town His woe begone face and the quasi-clerical cut of his dust stained, filthy costume caught my humour Our eyes met He hesitated "Sir," he said with a catching of the

breath, "could you spare a few minutes for what I fear will seem an incredible story?"

"Incredible?" I said.

"Quite," he answered eagerly. "No one will believe it, alter it though I may. Yet I can assure you, sir——"

He stopped hopelessly. The man's tone tickled me. He seemed an odd character. "I am," he said, "one of the most unfortunate beings alive."

"Among other things, you haven't dined?" I said, struck with an idea.

"I have not," he said solemnly, "for many days."

"You'll tell it better after that," I said, and without more ado led the way to a low place I knew, where such a costume as his was unlikely to give offence. And there—with certain omissions which he subsequently supplied—I got his story. At first I was incredulous, but as the wine warmed him, and the faint suggestion of cringing which his misfortunes had added to his manner disappeared, I began to believe. At last, I was so far convinced of his sincerity that I got him a bed for the night, and next day verified the banker's reference he gave me through my Jamaica banker. And that done, I took him shopping for underwear and suchlike equipments of a gentleman at large. Presently came the verified reference. His astonishing story was true. I will not amplify our subsequent proceedings. He started for England in three days' time.

"I do not know how I can possibly thank you enough," began the letter he wrote me from England, "for all your kindness to a total stranger," and proceeded for some time in a similar strain. "Had it not been for your generous assistance, I could certainly never have returned in time for the resumption of my scholastic duties, and my few minutes of reckless folly would perhaps have proved my ruin. As it is, I am entangled in a tissue of lies and evasions of the most complicated sort, to account for my sunburnt appearance and my whereabouts. I have rather carelessly told

two or three different stories, not realising the trouble this would mean for me in the end The truth I dare not tell I have consulted a number of law books in the British Museum, and there is not the slightest doubt that I have connived at and abetted and aided a felony That scoundrel Bingham was the Hithergate bank manager, I find, and guilty of the most flagrant embezzlement Please, please burn this letter when read—I trust you implicitly The worst of it is neither my aunt nor her friend who kept the boarding house at which I was staying seem altogether to believe a guarded statement I have made them — practically of what actually happened They suspect me of some discreditable adventure, but what sort of discreditable adventure they suspect me of, I do not know My aunt says she would forgive me if I told her everything I have—I have told her *more* than everything, and still she is not satisfied It would never do to let them know the truth of the case, of course, and so I represent myself as having been waylaid and gagged upon the beach My aunt wants to know *why* they waylaid and gagged me, why they took me away in their yacht I do not know Can you suggest any reason? I can think of nothing If, when you wrote, you could write on two sheets so that I could show her one and on that one if you could show clearly that I really *was* in Jamaica this summer, and had come there by being removed from a ship, it would be of great service to me It would certainly add to the load of my obligation to you—a load that I fear I can never fully repay Although if gratitude " And so forth At the end he repeated his request for me to burn the letter

So the remarkable story of Mr Ledbetter's Vacation ends That breach with his aunt was not of long duration The old lady had forgiven him before she died

STORY THE TENTH

The Stolen Body

MR BESSEL was the senior partner in the firm of Bessel, Hart, and Brown, of St Paul's Churchyard, and for many years he was well known among those interested in psychical research as a liberal minded and conscientious investigator He was an unmarried man, and instead of living in the suburbs, after the fashion of his class, he occupied rooms in the Albany, near Piccadilly He was particularly interested in the questions [illegible] of the living, [illegible] the following [illegible] I shut him [illegible] Mr Vincey in his sitting room in Staple Inn, and each then fixed his mind as resolutely as possible on the other Mr Bessel had acquired the art of self hypnotism, and, so far as he could, he attempted first to hypnotise himself

and then to project himself as a "phantom of the living" across the intervening space of nearly two miles into Mr Vincey's apartment On several evenings this [illegible]

white and his expression anxious, and, moreover, that his hair was disordered For a moment Mr Vincey, in spite of his state of expectation, was too surprised to speak or move and in that moment it seemed to him as though the figure glanced over its shoulder and incontinently vanished

It had been arranged that an attempt should be made to photograph any phantasm seen but Mr Vincey had not the instant presence of mind to snap the camera that lay ready on the table beside him and when he did so he was too late Greatly elated, however, even by this partial success he made a note of the exact time, and at once took a cab to the Albany to inform Mr Bessel of this result

He was surprised to find Mr Bessel's outer door standing open to the night and the inner apartments lit and in an extraordinary disorder An empty champagne magnum lay smashed upon the floor its neck had been broken off against the inkpot on the bureau and lay beside it An octagonal occasional table, which carried a bronze statuette and a number of choice books had been rudely overturned and down the primrose paper of the wall inky fingers had been drawn as it seemed for the mere pleasure of defilement One of the delicate chintz curtains had been violently torn from its rings and thrust upon the fire, so that the smell of its smouldering filled the room Indeed the whole place was disarranged in the strangest fashion For a few minutes Mr Vincey, who had entered sure of finding Mr Bes[illegible] n his easy chair awaiting him could scarcely

believe his eyes, and stood staring helplessly at these unanticipated things.

Then, full of a vague sense of calamity, he sought the porter at the entrance lodge. "Where is Mr Bessel?" he asked. "Do you know that all the furniture is broken in Mr Bessel's room?" The porter said nothing, but, obeying his gestures, came at once to Mr Bessel's [illegible] to see the state of affairs. "This settles it," he said, surveying the lunatic confusion. "I didn't know of this. Mr Bessel's gone off. He's mad!"

He then proceeded to tell Mr Vincey that about half an hour previously, that is to say, at about the time of Mr Bessel's apparition in Mr Vincey's rooms, the young gentleman had rushed out of the gates of the Albany into Vigo Street, hatless and with disordered hair, and had vanished into the direction of Bond Street. "And as he went past me," said the porter, "he laughed—a sort of gasping laugh, with his mouth open and his eyes glaring—I tell you, sir, he fair scared me!—like this."

According to his imitation it was anything but a pleasant laugh. "He waved his hand, with all his fingers crooked and clawing—like that. And he said, in a sort of fierce whisper, '*Life*.' Just that one word '*Life!*'"

"Dear me," said Mr Vincey. "Tut, tut," and "Dear me!" He could think of nothing else to say. He was naturally very much surprised. He turned from the room to the porter and from the porter to the room in the gravest perplexity. Beyond his suggestion that probably Mr Bessel would come back presently and explain what had happened, their conversation was unable to proceed. "It might be a sudden tooth ache," said the porter, "a very sudden and violent tooth ache, jumping on him suddenly like and driving him wild. I've broken things myself before now in such a case. . . ." He thought. "If it was, why should he say '*life*' to me as he went past?"

Mr. Vincey did not know. Mr. Bessel did not return, and at last Mr. Vincey, having done some more helpless staring and having addressed a note of brief inquiry and left it in a conspicuous position on the bureau, returned in a very perplexed frame of mind to his own premises in Staple Inn. This affair had given him a shock. He was at a loss to account for Mr. Bessel's conduct on any sane hypothesis. He tried to read, but he could not do so; he went for a short walk, and was so preoccupied that he narrowly escaped a cab at the top of Chancery Lane; and at last—a full hour before his usual time—he went to bed. For a considerable time he could not sleep because of his memory of the silent confusion of Mr. Bessel's apartment, and when at length he did attain an uneasy slumber it was at once disturbed by a very vivid and distressing dream of Mr. Bessel.

He saw Mr. Bessel gesticulating wildly, and with his face white and contorted. And, inexplicably mingled with his appearance, suggested perhaps by his gestures, was an intense fear, an urgency to act. He even believes that he heard the voice of his fellow experimenter calling distressfully to him, though at the time he considered this to be an illusion. The vivid impression remained though Mr. Vincey awoke. For a space he lay awake and trembling in the darkness, possessed with that vague, unaccountable terror of unknown possibilities that comes out of dreams upon even the bravest men. But at last he roused himself, and turned over and went to sleep again, only for the dream to return with enhanced vividness.

He awoke with such a strong conviction that Mr. Bessel was in overwhelming distress and need of help that sleep was no longer possible. He was persuaded that his friend had rushed out to some dire calamity. For a time he lay reasoning vainly against this belief, but at last he gave way to it. He arose, against all reason, lit his gas and dressed, and set out through the

deserted streets—deserted, save for a noiseless policeman or so and the early news carts—towards Vigo Street to inquire if Mr Bessel had returned

But he never got there As he was going down Long Acre some unaccountable impulse turned him aside out of the street towards Covent Garden which was just waking to its nocturnal activities He saw the market in front of him—a queer effect of glowing yellow lights and busy black figures He became aware of a shouting, and perceived a figure turn the corner by the hotel and run swiftly towards him He knew at once that it was Mr Bessel But it was Mr Bessel transfigured He was hatless and dishevelled, his collar was torn open, he grasped a bone handled walking cane near the ferrule end and his mouth was pulled awry And he ran, with agile strides, very rapidly Their encounter was the affair of an instant "Bessel!" cried Vincey

The running man gave no sign of recognition either of Mr Vincey or of his own name Instead, he cut at his friend savagely with the stick, hitting him in the face within an inch of the eye Mr Vincey, stunned and astonished, staggered back, lost his footing and fell heavily on the pavement It seemed to him that Mr Bessel leapt over him as he fell When he looked again Mr Bessel had vanished, and a policeman and a number of garden porters and salesmen were rushing past towards Long Acre in hot pursuit

With the assistance of several passers by—for the whole street was speedily alive with running people—Mr Vincey struggled to his feet He at once became the centre of a crowd greedy to see his injury A multitude of voices competed to reassure him of his safety, and then to tell him of the behaviour of the madman, as they regarded Mr Bessel He had suddenly appeared in the middle of the market screaming "*Life! Life!*" striking left and right with a blood stained walking stick, and dancing and shouting with laughter at each successful blow A lad and two women

had broken heads, and he had smashed a man's wrist, a little child had been knocked insensible and for a time he had driven everyone before him so furious and resolute had his behaviour been Then he made a raid upon a coffee stall, hurled its paraffin flare through the window of the post office, and fled laughing, after stunning the foremost of the two policemen who had the pluck to charge him

Mr Vincey's first impulse was naturally to join in the pursuit of his friend, in order if possible to save him from the violence of the indignant people But his action was slow, the blow had half stunned him, and while this was still no more than a resolution came the news, shouted through the crowd that Mr Bessel had eluded his pursuers At first Mr Vincey could scarcely credit this, but the universality of the report, and presently the dignified return of two futile policemen, convinced him After some aimless inquiries he returned towards Staple Inn padding a handkerchief to a now very painful nose

He was angry and astonished and perplexed It *appeared to him indisputable that Mr Bessel must have* gone violently mad in the midst of his experiment in thought transference, but why that should make him appear with a sad white face in Mr Vincey's dreams seemed a problem beyond solution He racked his brains in vain to explain this It seemed to him at last that not simply Mr Bessel, but the order of things must be insane But he could think of nothing to do He shut himself carefully into his room, lit his fire—it was a gas fire with asbestos bricks—and, fearing fresh dreams if he went to bed, remained bathing his injured face, or holding up books in a vain attempt to read, until dawn Throughout that vigil he had a curious persuasion that Mr Bessel was endeavouring to speak to him, but he would not let himself attend to any such belief

About dawn, his physical fatigue asserted itself and

he went to bed and slept at last in spite of dreaming He rose late, unrested and anxious and in considerable facial pain The morning papers had no news of Mr Bessel's aberration—it had come too late for them Mr Vincey's perplexities, to which the fever of his brain added fresh irritation became at last intolerable, and after a fruitless visit to the Albany, he went down to St Paul's Churchyard to Mr Hart, Mr Bessel's partner, and so far as Mr Vincey knew, his nearest friend

He was surprised to learn that Mr Hart, although he knew nothing of the outbreak, had also been disturbed by a vision, the very vision that Mr Vincey had seen—Mr Bessel, white and dishevelled, pleading earnestly by his gestures for help That was his impression of the import of his signs "I was just going to look him up in the Albany when you arrived," said Mr Hart "I was so sure of something being wrong with him"

As the outcome of their consultation the two gentlemen decided to inquire at Scotland Yard for news of their missing friend "He is bound to be laid by the heels" said Mr Hart "He can't go on at that pace for long" But the police authorities had not laid Mr Bessel by the heels They confirmed Mr Vincey's overnight experiences and added fresh circumstances, some of an even graver character than those he knew—a list of smashed glass along the upper half of Tottenham Court Road, an attack upon a policeman in Hampstead Road, and an atrocious assault upon a woman *All* these outrages were committed between half past twelve and a quarter to two in the morning, and between those hours—and, indeed, from the very moment of Mr Bessel's first rush from his rooms at half past nine in the evening—they could trace the deepening violence of his fantastic career For the last hour, at least from before one, that is until a quarter to two he had run amuck through London, eluding with amazing agility every effort to stop or capture him

But after a quarter to two he had vanished Up to that hour witnesses were multitudinous Dozens of *people had seen him fled from him or pursued him* and then things suddenly came to an end At a quarter to two he had been seen running down the Euston Road towards Baker Street, flourishing a can of burning colza oil and jerking splashes of flame therefrom at the windows of the houses he passed But none of the policemen on Euston Road beyond the Waxwork Exhibition, nor any of those in the side streets down which he must have passed had he left the Euston Road, had seen anything of him Abruptly he disappeared Nothing of his subsequent doings came to light in spite of the keenest inquiry

Here was a fresh astonishment for Mr Vincey He had found considerable comfort in Mr Hart's conviction "*He is bound to be laid by the heels before long*" and in that assurance he had been able to suspend his mental perplexities But any fresh development seemed destined to add new impossibilities to a pile already heaped beyond the powers of his acceptance He found himself doubting whether his memory might not have played him some grotesque trick, debating whether any of these things could possibly have happened and in the afternoon he hunted up Mr Hart again to share the intolerable weight on his mind He found Mr Hart engaged with a well known private detective, *but as that gentleman accomplished nothing* in this case, we need not enlarge upon his proceedings

All that day Mr Bessel's whereabouts eluded an unceasingly active inquiry, and all that night And all that day there was a persuasion in the back of Mr Vincey's mind that Mr Bessel sought his attention, and all through the night Mr Bessel with a tear stained face of anguish pursued him through his dreams And whenever he saw Mr Bessel in his dreams he also saw a number of other faces, vague but malignant, that seemed to be pursuing Mr Bessel

It was on the following day, Sunday, that Mr Vincey recalled certain remarkable stories of Mrs Bullock the medium who was then attracting attention for the first time in London He determined to consult her She was staying at the house of that well known inquirer Dr Wilson Paget, and Mr Vincey, although he had never met that gentleman before, repaired to him forthwith with the intention of invoking her help But scarcely had he mentioned the name of Bessel when Doctor Paget interrupted him "Last night—just at the end" he said, "we had a communication"

He left the room, and returned with a slate on which were certain words written in a handwriting, shaky indeed but indisputably the handwriting of Mr Bessel!

"How did you get this?" said Mr Vincey "Do you mean?——"

"We got it last night," said Doctor Paget With numerous interruptions from Mr Vincey, he proceeded to explain how the writing had been obtained It appears that in her *séances*, Mrs Bullock passes into a condition of trance, her eyes rolling up in a strange way under her eyelids and her body becoming rigid She then begins to talk very rapidly, usually in voices other than her own At the same time one or both of her hands may become active, and if slates and pencils are provided they will then write messages simultaneously with and quite independently of the flow of words from her mouth By many she is considered an even more remarkable medium than the celebrated Mrs Piper It was one of these messages, the one written by her left hand that Mr Vincey now had before him It consisted of eight words written disconnectedly "George Bessel trial excavn Baker Street help starvation" Curiously enough, neither Doctor Paget nor the two other inquirers who were present had heard of the disappearance of Mr Bessel—the news of it appeared only in the evening papers of Saturday—and they had put the message aside with many others of a

vague and enigmatical sort that Mrs Bullock has from time to time delivered

When Doctor Paget heard Mr Vincey's story, he gave himself at once with great energy to the pursuit of this clue to the discovery of Mr Bessel It would serve no useful purpose here to describe the inquiries of Mr Vincey and himself since it that the clue was a genuine one, and that Mr Bessel was actually discovered by its aid

He was found at the bottom of a detached shaft which had been sunk and abandoned at the commencement of the work for the new electric railway near Baker Street Station His arm and leg and two ribs were broken [illegible] 20 *feet high*, [illegible] Bessel, a stout, [illegible] ed in order to [illegible] c lza oil and the smashed tin lay beside h[illegible] but luckily the flame had been extinguished by his fall And his madness had passed from him altogether But he was, of course terribly enfeebled and at the sight of his rescuers he gave way to hysterical weeping

In view of the deplorable state of his flat he was [illegible] he had passed was carefully avoided But on the second day he volunteered a statement

Since that occasion Mr Bessel has several times repeated this statement—to myself among other people—varying the details as the narrator of real experiences always does, but never by any chance contradicting himself in any particular And the statement he makes i in substance as follows

In order to understand it clearly it is necessary to go back to his experiments with Mr Vincey before his remarkable attack Mr Bessel's first attempts at self projection, in his experiments with Mr Vincey, were

as the reader will remember, unsuccessful But through all of them he was concentrating all his power and will upon getting out of the body—"willing it with all my might" he says At last, almost against expectation, came success And Mr Bessel asserts that he, being alive did actually, by an effort of will, leave his body and pass into some place or state outside this world

The release was, he asserts, instantaneous "At one moment I was seated in my chair, with my eyes tightly shut my hands gripping the arms of the chair, doing all I could to concentrate my mind on Vincey, and then I perceived myself outside my body—saw my body near me, but certainly not containing me, with the hands relaxing and the head drooping forward on the breast"

Nothing shakes him in his assurance of that release He describes in a quiet, matter of fact way the new sensation he experienced He felt he had become impalpable—so much he had expected, but he had not expected to find himself enormously large So, however, it would seem he became "I was a great cloud—if I may express it that way—anchored to my body It appeared to me, at first, as if I had discovered a greater self of which the conscious being in my brain was only a little part I saw the Albany and Piccadilly and Regent Street and all the rooms and places in the houses very minute and very bright and distinct, spread out below me like a little city seen from a balloon Every now and then vague shapes like drifting wreaths of smoke made the vision a little indistinct, but at first I paid little heed to them The thing that astonished me most, and which astonishes me still, is that I saw quite distinctly the insides of the houses as well as the streets saw little people dining and talking in the private houses, men and women dining, playing billiards and drinking in restaurants and hotels, and several places of entertainment crammed with people It was like watching the affairs of a glass hive"

Such were Mr Bessel's exact words as I took them down when he told me the story Quite forgetful of *Mr Vincey, he remained for a space observing these* things Impelled by curiosity, he says he stooped down, and with the shadowy arm he found himself possessed of attempted to touch a man walking along Vigo Street But he could not do so though his finger seemed to pass through the man Something prevented his doing this, but what it was he finds it hard to describe He compares the obstacle to a sheet of glass

"I felt as a kitten may feel," he said "when it goes for the first time to pat its reflection in a mirror" Again and again, on the occasion when I heard him tell this story, Mr Bessel returned to that comparison of the sheet of glass Yet it was not altogether a precise comparison because, as the reader will speedily see, there were interruptions of this generally impermeable resistance, means of getting through the barrier to the material world again But naturally there is a very great difficulty in expressing these unprecedented impressions in the language of everyday experience

A thing that impressed him instantly, and which weighed upon him throughout all this experience, was the stillness of this place—he was in a world without sound

At first Mr Bessel's mental state was an unemotional wonder His thought chiefly concerned itself with where he might be He was out of the body—out of his material body, at any rate—but that was not all He believes, and I for one believe also, that he was somewhere out of space, as we understand it, altogether By a strenuous effort of will he had passed out of his body into a world beyond this world, a world undreamt of, yet lying so close to it and so strangely situated with regard to it that all things on this earth are clearly visible both from without and from within in this other world about us For a long time, as it seemed to him, this realisation occupied his mind to the

-xclus on of all other matters, and then he recalled the engagement with Mr Vincey, to which this astonishing experience was, after all, but a prelude

He turned his mind to locomotion in this new body in which he found himself For a time he was unable to [illegible]

c[illegible]

m[illegible]

w[illegible]

the link that bound him snapped For a moment every thing was hidden by what appeared to be whirling sphe--s of dark vapour, and then through a momentary gap he saw his drooping body collapse limply, saw his lifeless head drop sideways, and found h- was driving along like a huge cloud in a strange place of shadowy clouds that had the luminous intricacy of London spread like a model below

But now he was aware that the fluctuating vapour about him was something more than vapour, and the temerarious excitement of his first essay was shot with fear For he perceived, at first indistinctly, and then suddenly very clearly, that he was surrounded by *faces!* that each roll and coil of the seeming cloud stuff was a face And such faces! Faces of thin shadow, faces of gaseous tenuity Faces like those faces that glare with intolerable strangeness upon the sleeper in the evil hours of his dreams Evil, greedy eyes that were full of a covetous curiosity, faces with knit brows and snarling smiling lips their vague hands clutched at Mr Bessel as he passed and the rest of their bodies was but an elusive streak of trailing darkness Never a word they said never a sound from th- mouths that seemed to gibber All about him they pressed in that dreary silence, passing freely through the dim mistiness that was his body, gathering ever more numerously about him And the shadowy Mr Bessel, now suddenly fear stricken drove through the silent, active multitude of eyes and clutching hands

So inhuman were these faces so malignant their staring eyes, and shadowy, clawing gestures that it did not occur to Mr Bessel to attempt intercourse with these drifting creatures Idiot phantoms they seemed chil dren of vain desire, beings unborn and forbidden the boon of being, whose only expre s ons and gestures told of the envy and craving for life that was their one link with existence

It says much for his resolution that am dst the swarm ing cloud of these noiseless spirits of evil, he could still think of Mr Vincey He made a violent effort of will and found himself, he knew not how, stoop ng towards Staple Inn, saw Vincey sitting attentive and alert in his *armchair by the fire*

And clustering also about him as they clustered ever about all that lives and breathes was another multi tude of these vain voiceless shadows longing desiring seeking some loophole into life

For a space Mr Bessel sought ineffectually to attract his friend's attention He tried to get in front of his eyes, to move the objects in his room, to touch him But Mr *Vincey re*mained unaffected ignorant of the being that was so close to his own The strange some thing that Mr Bessel has compared to a sheet of glass [illegible]

. . . .

extended his shadowy hand and thrust his vague black fingers as it seemed, through the heedless brain

Then, suddenly, Mr Vincey started like a man who recalls his attention from wandering thoughts, and it seemed to Mr Bessel that a little dark red body situated in the middle of Mr Vincey's brain swelled and glowed as he did so Since that experience he has been shown anatomical figures of the brain and he knows now that this is that useless structure, as doctors call it, the pineal eye For, strange as it will seem to many, we have

exclusion of all other matters, and then he recalled the engagement with Mr Vincey, to which this astonishing experience was, after all, but a prelude

He turned his mind to locomotion in this new body in which he found himself For a time he was unable to [illegible]
carcass [illegible]
simply sw[illegible]
with his [illegible]
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And clustering also about him, as they clustered ever about all that lives and breathes, was another multitude of these vain voiceless shadows, longing, desiring, seeking some loophole into life.

For a space Mr Bessel sought ineffectually to attract his friend's attention. He tried to get in front of his eyes, to move the objects in his room, to touch him. But Mr Vincey remained unaffected, ignorant of the being that was so close to his own. The strange something that Mr Bessel has compared to a sheet of glass

recalls his attention from wandering thoughts, and it seemed to Mr Bessel that a little dark red body situated in the middle of Mr Vincey's brain swelled and glowed as he did so. Since that experience he has been shown anatomical figures of the brain, and he knows now that this is that useless structure, as doctors call it, the pineal eye. For strange as it will seem to many, we have

deep in our brains—where it cannot possibly see any earthly light—an eye! At the time this with the rest of the internal anatomy of the brain was quite new to him At the sight of its changed appearance however, he thrust forth his finger, and rather fearful still of the consequences, touched this little spot And instantly Mr Vincey started, and Mr Bessel knew that he was seen

And at that instant it came to Mr Bessel that evil had happened to his body, and behold! a great wind blew through all that world of shadows and tore him away So strong was this persuasion that he thought no more of Mr Vincey, but turned about forthwith, and all the countless faces drove back with him like leaves before a gale But he returned too late *In an* instant he saw the body that he had left inert and collapsed—lying indeed like the body of a man just dead —had arisen had arisen by virtue of some strength and will beyond his own It stood with staring eyes, stretching its limbs in dubious fashion

For a moment he watched it in wild dismay, and then he stooped towards it But the pane of glass had closed against him again, and he was foiled *He beat* himself passionately against this, and all about him the spirits of evil grinned and pointed and mocked *He* gave way to furious anger He compares himself *to a* bird that has fluttered heedlessly into a room and is beating at the window pane that holds it back from freedom

And behold! the little body that had once been his was now dancing with delight He saw it *shouting*, though he could not hear its shouts he saw the violence of its movements grow He watched it fling his cherished furniture about in the mad delight of existence, rend his books apart, smash bottles, drink heedlessly from the jagged fragments, leap and *smite in a* passionate acceptance of living He watched these actions in paralyzed astonishment Then once more he

hurled himself against the impassable barrier, and then, with all that crew of mocking ghosts about him, hurried back in dire confusion to Vincey to tell him of the outrage that had come upon him

But the brain of Vincey was now closed against apparitions, and the disembodied Mr Bessel pursued him in vain as he hurried out into Holborn to call a cab Foiled and terror stricken Mr Bessel swept back again, to find his desecrated body whooping in a glorious frenzy down the Burlington Arcade

And now the attentive reader begins to understand Mr Bessel's interpretation of the first part of this strange story The being whose frantic rush through London had inflicted so much injury and disaster had indeed Mr Bessel's body, but it was not Mr Bessel It was an evil spirit out of that strange world beyond existence, into which Mr Bessel had so rashly ventured For twenty hours it held possession of him, and for all those twenty hours the dispossessed spirit body of Mr Bessel was going to and fro in that unheard of middle world of shadows seeking help in vain

He spent many hours beating at the minds of Mr Vincey and of his friend Mr Hart Each, as we know, he roused by his efforts But the language that might convey his situation to these helpers across the gulf he did not know, his feeble fingers groped vainly and powerlessly in their brains Once indeed, as we have already told, he was able to turn Mr Vincey aside from his path so that he encountered the stolen body in its career, but he could not make him understand the thing *that had happened* he was unable to draw any help from that encounter

All through those hours the persuasion was over whelming in Mr Bessel's mind that presently his body would be killed by its furious tenant, and he would have to remain in this shadow land for evermore So that those long hours were a growing agony of fear And ever as he hurried to and fro in his ineffectual excite

ment innumerable spirits of that world about him nobbed him and confused his mind And ever an envious applauding multitude poured after their successful fellow as he went upon his glorious career

For that it would seem, must be the life of these bodiless things of this world that is the shadow of our world Ever they watch, coveting a way into a mortal body in order that they may descend, as furies and frenzies as violent lusts and mad, strange impulses rejoicing in the body they have won For Mr Bessel was not the only human soul in that place Witness the fact that he met first one, and afterwards several shadows of men, men like himself, it seemed, who had lost their bodies even it may be as he had lost his, and wandered, despairingly, in that lost world that is neither life nor death They could not speak because that world is silent, yet he knew them for men because of their dim human bodies, and because of the sadness of their faces

But how they had come into that world he could not tell, nor where the bodies they had lost might be, whether they still raved about the earth, or whether they were closed for ever in death against return That they were the spirits of the dead neither he nor I believe But Doctor Wilson Paget thinks they are the rational souls of men who are lost in madness on the earth

At last Mr Bessel chanced upon a place where a little crowd of such disembodied silent creatures was gathered, and thrusting through them he saw below a brightly lit room, and four or five quiet gentlemen and a woman a stoutish woman dressed in black bombazine and sitting awkwardly in a chair with her head thrown back He knew her from her portraits to be Mrs Bullock, the medium And he perceived that tracts and structures in her brain glowed and stirred as he had seen the pineal eye in the brain of Mr Vincey glow The light was very fitful, sometimes it was a broad illumination, and

sometimes merely a faint twilight spot, and it shifted slowly about her brain She kept on talking and writing with one hand And Mr Bessel saw that the crowding shadows of men about him, and a great multitude of the shadow spirits of that shadow land, were all striving and thrusting to touch the lighted regions of her brain As one gained her brain or another was thrust away, her voice and the writing of her hand changed So that what she said was disorderly and confused for the most part now a fragment of one soul's message, and now a fragment of another s, and now she babbled the insane fancies of the spirits of vain desire Then Mr Bessel understood that she spoke for the spirit that had touch of her, and he began to struggle very furiously towards her But he was on the outside of the crowd and at that time he could not reach her, and at last growing anxious he went away to find what had happened meanwhile to his body

For a long time he went to and fro seeking it in vain and fearing that it must have been killed and then he found it at the bottom of the shaft in Baker Street writhing furiously and cursing with pain Its leg and an arm and two ribs had been broken by its fall Moreover, the evil spirit was angry because his time had been so short and because of the pain—making violent movements and casting his body about

And at that Mr Bessel returned with redoubled earnestness to the room where the *seance* was going on, and so soon as he had thrust himself within sight of the place he saw one of the men who stood about the medium looking at his watch as if he meant that the *séance* should presently end At that a great number of the shadows who had been striving turned away with gestures of despair But the thought that the *séance* was almost over only made Mr Bessel the more earnest and he struggled so stoutly with his will against the others that presently he gained the woman s bra n It chanced that just at that moment it glowed very brightly,

and in that instant she wrote the message that Doctor Wilson Paget preserved And then the other shadows and the cloud of evil spirits about him had thrust Mr Bessel away from her, and for all the rest of the *séance* he could regain her no more

So he went back and watched through the long hours at the bottom of the shaft where the evil spirit lay in the stolen body it had maimed, writhing and cursing, and weeping and groaning, and learning the lesson of pain And towards dawn the thing he had waited for happened, the brain glowed brightly and the evil spirit came out, and Mr Bessel entered the body he had feared he should never enter again As he did so, the silence—the brooding silence—ended, he heard the tumult of traffic and the voices of people overhead, and that strange world that is the shadow of our world—the dark and silent shadows of ineffectual desire and the shadows of lost men—vanished clean away

He lay there for the space of about three hours before he was found And in spite of the pain and suffering of his wounds, and of the dim damp place in which he lay, in spite of the tears—wrung from him by his physical distress—his heart was full of gladness to know that he was nevertheless back once more in the kindly world of men.



STORY THE ELEVENTH

Mr Brisher's Treasure

"YOU can't be *too* careful *who* you marry," said Mr Brisher, and pulled thoughtfully with a fat-wristed hand at the lank moustache that hides his want of chin.

"That's why——" I ventured.

"Yes," said Mr Brisher, with a solemn light in his bleary, blue-grey eyes, moving his head expressively and breathing alcohol intimately at me. "There's lots as 'ave 'ad a try at me—many as I could name in *this* town—but none 'ave done it—none."

I surveyed the flushed countenance, the equatorial expansion, the masterly carelessness of his attire, and heaved a sigh to think that by reason of the unworthiness of women he must needs be the last of his race.

"I was a smart young chap when I was younger," said Mr Brisher. "I 'ad my work cut out. But I was very careful—very. And I got through..."

He leant over the taproom table and thought visibly on the subject of my trustworthiness. I was relieved at last by his confidence.

"Many's the evenin' we've met and sung 'ims there, me and 'er and the family

"'Er father was quite a leadin' man in chapel You should ha' seen him Sundays, interruptin' the minister and givin' out 'ims He had gold spectacles, I remember, and used to look over 'em at you while he sing hearty—he was always great on singing 'earty to the Lord—and when *he* got out o' toon 'arf the people went after 'im—always 'E was that sort of man And to walk be'ind 'im in 'is nice black clo'es—'is 'at was a brimmer—made one regular proud to be engaged to such a father in law And when the summer came I went down there and stopped a fortnight

"Now, you know there was a sort of Itch," said Mr Brisher "We wanted to marry, me and Jane did, and get things settled But '*E* said I 'ad to get a proper position first Consequently there was a Itch Consequently, when I went down there, I was anxious to show that I was a good useful sort of chap like Show I could do pretty nearly everything like See?"

I made a sympathetic noise

"And down at the bottom of their garden was a bit of wild part like So I says to 'im, 'Why don't you 'ave a rockery 'ere?' I says 'It 'ud look nice'

"'Too much expense,' he says

"'Not a penny,' says I 'I'm a dab at rockeries Lemme make you one' You see, I'd 'elped my brother make a rockery in the beer garden be'ind 'is tap, so I knew 'ow to do it to rights 'Lemme make you one,' I says 'It's 'olidays, but I'm that sort of chap, I 'ate doing nothing,' I says 'I'll make you one to rights' And the long and the short of it was, he said I might

"And that's 'ow I come on the treasure"

"What treasure?" I asked

"Why!" said Mr Brisher, "the treasure I'm tellin' you about, what's the reason why I never married"

"What!—a treasure—dug up?"

"Yes—buried wealth—treasure trove Come out of the ground What I *kept on saying—regular treasure* . ' He looked at me with unusual disrespect

"It wasn't more than a foot deep, not the top of it," he said "I'd 'ardly got thirsty like, before I come on the corner"

"Go on," I said "I didn't understand"

"Why! Directly I 'it the box I knew it was treasure A sort of instinct told me Something seemed to shout inside of me—'Now's your chance—lie low' It's lucky I knew the laws of treasure trove or I'd 'ave been shoutin' there and then I dare say you know——?"

"Crown bags it," I said, "all but one per cent *Go* on It's a shame What did you do?"

"Uncovered the top of the box There wasn't anybody in the garden or about like Jane was 'elping 'er mother do the 'ouse I *was* excited—I tell *you* I tried the lock and then gave a whack at the hinges Open it came Silver coins—full! Shining It made me tremble to see 'em And jest then—I'm blessed if the dustman didn't come round the back of the 'ouse It pretty nearly gave me 'eart disease to think what a fool I was to 'ave that money showing And directly after I 'eard the chap next door—'e was 'olidaying too —I 'eard him watering 'is beans If only 'e'd looked over the fence!"

"What did you do?"

"Kicked the lid on again and covered it up like a shot, and went on digging about a yard away from it—like mad And my face, so to speak, was laughing on its own account till I had it hid I tell you I was regular scared like at my luck I jest thought that it 'ad to be kep' close and that was all 'Treasure,' I kep' whisperin' to myself, 'Treasure' and ''undreds of pounds, 'undreds, 'undreds of pounds' Whispering to myself like, and digging like blazes It seemed to me the box was regular sticking out and showing, like your legs do under the sheets in bed, and I went and put all

the earth I'd got out of my 'ole for the rockery slap on top of it I *was* in a sweat And in the mi lst of it all o it to l lles 'er father He didn't say anything to me, jest stco l behind me and stared, but Jane tole me afterwar ls when he went indoors, 'e says 'That there jack anapes of yours, Jane'—he always called me a jacka nan me ow— knows 'ow to put 'is back into it after all Seemed quite impressed by it, 'e did"

H v long was the box?' I asked, suddenly

Ow long?" said Mr Brisher

"Yes—in length?"

Oh ' bout so—by so" Mr Brisher indicated a m derate sized trunk

Full? said I

"F ill up of silver coins—arf crowns, I believe"

'Why!' I cried "that would mean—hundreds of p n ls

"Thousands," said Mr Brisher, in a sort of sad calm "I calc lated it out"

"But how did they get there?"

"All I know is what I found What I thought at the time was this The chap who'd owned the 'ouse before er father 'd been a regular slap up burglar What you'd call a 'igh class criminal Used to drive 'is trap—like Peace did" Mr Brisher meditated on the difficulties of narration and embarked on a complicated parenthesis "I don't know if I told you it'd been a burglar's 'ouse before it was my girl's father's, and I knew e'd robbed a mail train once, I did know that It seemed to me——"

"That's very likely," I said "But what did you do?"

"Sweated" said Mr Brisher "Regular run orf me All that morning" said Mr Brisher, 'I was at it, pretending to make that rockery and wondering what I should do I'd 'ave told 'er father p'r'aps only I was doubtful of 'is honesty—I was afraid he might rob me of it like, and give it up to the authorities—and besides

considering I was marrying into the family, I thought it would be nicer like if it came through me Put me on a better footing, so to speak Well I ad three days before me left of my 'olidays, so there wasn t no hurry, so I covered it up and went on digging and tried to puzzle out 'ow I was to make sure of it Only I couldn't

"I thought," said Mr Brisher ' *and* I thought Once I got regular doubtful whether I d seen it or not, and went down to it and ad it uncovered again, just as her ma came out to 'ang p a bit of wash n' she d done Jumps again! Afterwards I was just thinking I'd 'ave another go at it, when Jane comes to tell me dinner was ready 'You'll want it,' she said, 'seeing all the 'ole you've dug'

"I was in a regular daze all dinner, wondering whether that chap next door wasn t over the fence and filling 'is pockets But in the afternoon I got easier in my mind—it seemed to me it must 'ave been there so long it was pretty sure to stop a bit longer—and I tried to get up a bit of a discussion to dror out the old man and see what 'e thought of treas ire trove"

Mr Brisher paused, and affected amusement at the memory

"The old man was a scorcher,' he said, "a regular scorcher"

"What!" said I, "did he——?"

"It was like this ' explained Mr Brisher, laying a friendly hand on my arm and breathing into my face to calm me "Just to dror im out, I told a story of a chap I said I knew—pretendin', you know—who'd found a sovring in a novercoat 'e'd borrowed I said 'e stuck to it, but I said I wasn't sure whether that was right or not And then the old man began Lor' 'e *did* let me 'ave it!' Mr Brisher affected an insincere amusement "'E was, well—what you might call a rare 'and at snacks Said that was the sort of friend 'e'd naturally expect me to 'ave Said 'e'd naturally

expect that from the friend of a out of work loafer who took up with daughters who didn't belong to 'im There! I couldn't tell you *'arf* 'e said 'E went on most outrageous I stood up to 'im about it, just to dror 'im out 'Wouldn't you stick to a arf sov', not if you found it in the street?' I says 'Certainly not,' 'e says certainly I wouldn't' 'What! not if you found it as a sort of treasure?' 'Young man,' 'e says, 'there's r er th r ty than mine— Render unto Cæsar'—what is it? Yes Well, he fetched up that A rare 'and at itting you over the 'ed with the Bible, was the old man And so he went on 'E got to such Snacks about me at last I couldn't stand it I'd promised Jane not to answer im back, but it got a bit *too* thick I—I give it 'im "

Mr Brisher, by means of enigmatical facework, tried to make me think he had had the best of that argument but I knew better

"I went out in a 'uff at last But not before I was pretty sure I 'ad to lift that treasure by myself The only thing that kep' me up was thinking 'ow I'd take it out of 'im when I 'ad the cash "

There was a lengthy pause

"Now, you'd 'ardly believe it, but all them three days I never 'ad a chance at the blessed treasure, never got out not even a 'arf crown There was always a Somethink—always

"'Stonishing thing it isn't thought of more," said Mr Brisher "Finding treasure's no great shakes It's gettin' it I don't suppose I slep' a wink any of those nights, thinking where I was to take it, what I was to do with it, 'ow I was to explain it It made me regular ill And days I was that dull, it made Jane regular 'uffy 'You ain't the same chap you was in London,' she says several times I tried to lay it on 'er father and 'is Snacks, but bless you, she knew better What must she ave but that I'd got another girl on my mind! Said I wasn't True Well, we had a bit of a row

But I was that set on the Treasure, I didn't seem to mind a bit Anything she said

"Well, at last I got a sort of plan I was always a bit good at planning, though carrying out isn't so much in my line I thought it all out and settled on a plan First, I was going to take all my pockets full of these 'ere 'arf crowns—see?—and afterwards—as I shall tell

"Well, I got to that state I couldn't think of getting at the Treasure again in the daytime, so I waited until the night before I had to go, and then, when everything was still, up I gets and slips down to the back door, meaning to get my pockets full What must I do in the scullery but fall over a pail? Up gets 'er *father with a gun—'e was a light sleeper was 'er father,* and very suspicious—and there was me 'ad to explain I'd come down to the pump for a drink because my water bottle was bad 'E didn't let me off a Snack or two over that bit, you lay a bob"

"And you mean to say——" I began

"Wait a bit," said Mr Brisher "I say, I'd made [illegible]

green and everythink I put a dab of green just to show where the box was They all came and looked at it, and said 'ow nice it was—even e' was a bit softer like to see it, and all he said was, 'It's a pity you can't always work like that, then you might get something definite to do,' he says

"'*Yes,' I says—I couldn't 'elp it—'I put a lot in* that rockery,' I says, like that See? 'I put a lot in that rockery'—meaning——"

"I see," said I—for Mr Brisher is apt to over elaborate his jokes

"'*E* didn't," said Mr Brisher "Not then, anyhow

"Ar'ever—after all that was over, off I set for London Orf I set for London "

Pause

"On y I wasn't going to no London," said Mr Brisher, with sudden animation, and thrusting his face into mine ' No fear! What do *you* think?

I didn't go no further than Colchester—not a yard

'I d left the spade just where I could find it I d got everything planned and right I 'ired a little trap in Colchester, and pretended I wanted to go to Ipswicl and stop the night, and come back next day, and the chap I ired it from made me leave two sovrings on it right away, and off I set

'I didn t go to no Ipswich neither

'Midnight the 'orse and trap was 'itched by the little road that ran by the cottage where 'e lived—not sixty yards off, it wasn't—and I was at it like a good 'un It was jest the night for such games—overcast—but a trifle too 'ot, and all round the sky there was summer lightning and presently a thunderstorm Down it came First big drops in a sort of fizzle, then 'ail I kep' on I whacked at it—I didn't dream the old man would 'ear I didn't even trouble to go quiet with the spade, and the thunder and lightning and 'ail seemed to excite me like I shouldn't wonder if I was sing ing I got so 'ard at it I clean forgot the thunder and the 'orse and trap I precious soon got the box show ing and started to lift it. . . ."

"Heavy?" I said

"I couldn't no more lift it than fly I *was* sick I'd never thought of that! I got *regular* wild—I tell you, I cursed I got sort of outrageous I didn't think of dividing it like for the minute, and even then I couldn't 'ave took money about loose in a trap I hoisted one end sort of wild like, and over the whole show went with a tremenjous noise Perfeck smash of silver And then right on the heels of that, Flash! Lightning like the day! and there was the back door open and the old man coming down the garden with 'is

blooming old gun He wasn't not a 'undred yards away!

"I tell you I was that upset—I didn't think what I was doing I never stopped—not even to fill my pockets I went over the fence like a shot and ran like one o'clock for the trap, cussing and swearing as I went I *was* in a state

"And will you believe me when I got to the place where I'd left the 'orse and trap, they'd gone Orf! When I saw that I 'adn't a cuss left for it I jest danced on the grass, and when I'd danced enough I started off to London I was done

Mr Brisher was pensive for an interval "I was done," he repeated, very bitterly

"Well?" I said

"That's all," said Mr Brisher

"You didn't go back?"

"No fear I'd 'ad enough of *that* blooming treasure, any'ow for a bit Besides, I didn't know what was done to chaps who tried to collar a treasure trove I started off for London there and then ."

"And you never went back?"

"Never"

"But about Jane? Did you write?"

"Three times, fishing like And no answer We'd parted in a bit of a 'uff on account of 'er being jealous So that I couldn't make out for certain what it meant

"I didn't know what to do I didn't even know whether the old man knew it was me I sort of kep' an eye open on papers to see when he'd give up that treasure to the Crown, as I hadn't a doubt 'e would considering 'ow respectable he'd always been"

"And did he?"

Mr Brisher pursed his mouth and moved his head slowly from side to side "Not '*im*," he said

"Jane was a nice girl," he said "a thorough nice girl mind you, *if* jealous and there's no knowing I mightn't 'ave gone back to 'er after a bit I thought if

he didn't give up the tr asure I might 'ave a sort of 'old on 'im   Well, one day I looks as usual under Colchester—and there I saw 'is name What for d yer th nk?"

I c uld not guess

Mr Brisher's voice sank to a whisper, and once more he spoke behind his hand His manner was suddenly suffused with a positive joy "Issuing counterfeit coins" he said "Counterfeit coins!"

"You don't mean to say——?"

"Yes—It Bad Quite a long case they made of it But they got 'im, though he dodged tremenjous Traced 'is aving passed, oh!—nearly a dozen bad 'arf crowns"

"And you didn't——?"

"No fear And it didn't do '*im* much good to say it was treasure trove"

STORY THE TWELFTH

Miss Winchelsea's Heart

MISS WINCHELSEA was going to Rome The matter had filled her mind for a month or more, and had overflowed so abundantly into her conversation that quite a number of people who were not going to Rome, and who were not likely to go to Rome, had made it a personal grievance against her Some indeed had attempted quite unavailingly to convince her that Rome was not nearly such a desirable place as it was reported to be, and others had gone so far as to suggest behind her back that she was dreadfully "stuck up" about "that Rome of hers" And little Lily Hardhurst had told her friend Mr Binns that so far as she was concerned Miss Winchelsea might "go to her old Rome and stop there, *she* (Miss Lily Hardhurst) wouldn't grieve" And the way in which Miss Winchelsea put herself upon terms of personal tenderness with Horace and Benvenuto Cellini and Raphael and Shelley and Keats—if she had been Shelley's widow she could not have professed a keener interest in his grave—was a

matter of universal astonishment Her dress was a ir [illegible] of tactful discretion, sensible but not too [illegible]ty "—Miss Winchelsea had a great dread of "touristy"—and her Baedeker was carried in a t[illegible] ea[illegible] ed [illegible] the Channel passage would be pleasant, and all [illegible]mens promised well There was the gayest sense a[illegible]enture in this unprecedented departure

She was going with two friends who had been fellow students with her at the training college, nice honest girls both, though not so good at history and literature as Miss Winchelsea They both looked up to her immensely, though physically they had to look down and she anticipated some pleasant times to be spent in "stirring them up" to her own pitch of æsthetic and historical enthusiasm They had secured seats *already*, and welcomed her effusively at the carriage door In the instant criticism of the encounter she noted that Fanny had a slightly "touristy" leather strap, and that Helen had succumbed to a serge jacket with side pockets into which her hands were thrust But they were much too happy with themselves and the expedition for their friend to attempt any hint at the moment about these things As soon as the first ecstasies were over—Fanny's enthusiasm was a little noisy and crude, and consisted mainly in emphatic repetitions of "Just *fancy!* we're going to Rome, my dear!—Rome!"—they gave their attention to their fellow travellers Helen was anxious to secure a compartment to themselves, and, in order to discourage intruders, got out and planted herself firmly on the step Miss Winchelsea peeped out over her shoulder, and made sly little remarks about the *accommo*lating people on the platform, at which Fanny laughed gleefully

They were travelling with one of Mr Thomas Gunn's

parties—fourteen days in Rome for fourteen pounds They did not belong to the personally conducted party of course—Miss Winchelsea had seen to that—but they travelled with it because of the convenience of that arrangement The people were the oddest mixture, and wonderfully amusing There was a vociferous red faced polyglot personal conductor in a pepper and salt suit, very long in the arms and legs and very a tive He *shouted proclamations When he wanted to speak to* people he stretched out an arm and held them until his purpose was accomplished One hand was full of papers tickets, counterfoils of tourists The people of the per sonally conducted party were it seem ed of two sorts, people the conductor wanted and could not find, and people he did not want and who followed him in a steadily growing tail up and down the platform These people seemed, indeed to think that their one chance of reaching Rome lay in keeping close to him Three little old ladies were particularly energetic in his pur suit, and at last maddened him to the pitch of clapping them into a carr age and daring them to emerge again For the rest of the time, one two, or three of their heads protruded from the window wailing enquiries about "a little wickerwork box' whenever he drew near There was a very stout man with a very stout wife in shiny black, there was a little old man like an aged ostler

"*What can* such people want in Rome?' asked Miss Winchelsea "What can it mean to them?" There was a tall curate in a very small straw hat, and a short curate encumbered by a long camera stand The con trast amused Fanny very much Once they heard some one calling for "Snooks" "I always thought that *name was invented* by novelists," said Miss Winchelsea "Fancy! Snooks I wonder which is Mr Snooks" Finally they picked out a stout and resolute little man in a large check suit "If he isn't Snooks, he ought to be," said Miss Winchelsea

Presently the conductor discovered Helen's attempt at a corner in carriages "Room for five," he bawled with a parallel translation on his fingers A party of four together—mother, father, and two daughters—blundered in, all greatly excited "It's all right, Ma—you let *me*" said one of the daughters hitting her mother's bonnet with a handbag she struggled to put in the rack Miss Winchelsea detested people who banged about and called their mother "Ma" A young man travelling alone followed He was not at all "touristy" in his costume, Miss Winchelsea observed, his Gladstone bag was of good pleasant leather with labels reminiscent of Luxembourg and Ostend, and his boots though brown, were not vulgar He carried an overcoat on his arm Before these people had properly settled in their places came an inspection of tickets and a slamming of doors and behold! they were gliding out of Charing Cross station on their way to Rome

"Fancy!" cried Fanny, "we are going to Rome, my dear! Rome! I don't seem to believe it, even now

Miss Winchelsea suppressed Fanny's emotions with a little smile and the lady who was called "Ma" explained to people in general why they had "cut it so close at the station The two daughters called her "Ma" several times, toned her down in a tactless effective way, and drove her at last to the muttered inventory of a basket of travelling requisites Presently she looked up "Lor!" she said, "I didn't bring *them!*" Both the daughters said "Oh, Ma!" but what "them" was did not appear Presently Fanny produced Hare's *Walks in Rome,* a sort of mitigated guide-book very popular among Roman visitors, and the father of the two daughters began to examine his books of tickets minutely, apparently in a search after English words When he had looked at the tickets for a long time right way up, he turned them upside down Then he produced a fountain pen and dated them with considerable care The young man having completed an

unostentatious survey of his fellow trav-llers produced a book and fell to reading When Helen and Fanny were looking out of the window at Ch slehurst—the place interested Fanny because the po r dear Empress of the French us-d to live there—Miss W inchelsea took the opportunity to observe the book the young man held It was not a guide book but a thin volume of poetry—*bound* She glanced at his face—it seemed a refined pleasant face to her hasty glance He wore a gilt *pince nez* "Do you think she lives there now? said Fanny, and Miss Winchelsea's inspection came to an end

For the rest of the journey Miss Winchelsea talked little, and what she said was as pleasant and as stamped with refinement as she could make it Her voice was always low and clear and pleasant and she took care that on this occasion it was particularly low and clear and pleasant As they came under the white cliffs the young man put his book of poetry away, and when at last the train stopped beside the boat he displayed a graceful alacrity with the impedimenta of Miss Winchelsea and her friends Miss Winchelsea "hated nonsense," but she was pleased to see the young man perceived at once that they were ladies and helped them without any violent geniality and how nicely he showed that his civilities were to be no excuse for further intrusions None of her party had been out of England before and they were all excited and nervous at the Chan el passage They stood in a little group in a good place near the middle of the boat—the young man had taken Miss Winchelsea's hold all there and had told her it was a good place—and they watched the white shores of Albion recede and quoted Shakespeare and made quiet fun of their fellow travellers in the English way

They were particularly *amused* at the *precautions the* bigger sized people had taken against the waves—cut lemons and flasks prevailed, one lady lay full length in a deck chair with a handkerchief over her face and a

very broad resolute man in a bright brown "touristy" suit walked all the way from England to France along the deck with his legs as widely apart as Providence permitted These were all excellent precautions, and nobody was ill The personally conducted party pursued the conductor about the deck with enquiries in a manner that suggested to Helen's mind the rather vulgar image of hens with a piece of bacon peel, until at last he went into hiding below And the young man with the thin volume of poetry stood in the stern watching England receding looking, to Miss Winchelsea's eye, rather lonely and sad

And then came Calais and tumultuous novelties and the young man had not forgotten Miss Winchelsea's hold all and the other little things All three girls though they had passed government examinations in French to any extent, were stricken with a dumb shame of their accents and the young man was very useful And he did not intrude He put them in a comfortable carriage and raised his hat and went away Miss Winchelsea thanked him in her best manner—a pleasing cultivated manner—and Fanny said he was "nice" almost before he was out of earshot "I wonder what he can be," said Helen "He's going to Italy, because I noticed green tickets in his book" Miss Winchelsea almost told them of the poetry, and decided not to do so And presently the carriage windows seized hold upon them and the young man was forgotten It made them feel that they were doing an educated sort of thing to travel through a country whose commonest advertisements were in idiomatic French, and Miss Winchelsea made unpatriotic comparisons because there were weedy little sign board advertisements by the rail side instead of the broad hoardings that deface the landscape in our land But the north of France is really uninteresting country, and after a time Fanny reverted to Hare's *Walks* and Helen initiated lunch Miss Winchelsea awoke out of a happy reverie, she had been trying to

realise, she said, that she was actually going to Rome, but she perceived at Helen's suggestion that she was hungry, and they lunched out of their baskets very cheerfully In the afternoon they were tired and silent until Helen made tea Miss Winchelsea might have dozed, only she knew Fanny slept with her mouth open, and as their fellow passengers were two rather nice critical looking ladies of uncertain age—who knew French well enough to talk it—she employed herself in keeping Fanny awake The rhythm of the train became insistent, and the streaming landscape outside at last quite painful to the eye Before their night's stoppage came they were already dreadfully tired of travelling

The stoppage for the night was brightened by the appearance of the young man and his manners were all that could be desired and his French quite serviceable His coupons availed for the same hotel as theirs, and by chance as it seemed he sat next Miss Winchelsea at the *table d'hôte* In spite of her enthusiasm for Rome, she had thought out some such possibility very thoroughly, and when he ventured to make a remark upon the tediousness of travelling—he let the soup and fish go by before he did this—she did not simply assent to his proposition but responded with another They were soon comparing their journeys, and Helen and Fanny were cruelly overlooked in the conversation It was to be the same journey they found, one day for the galleries at Florence—"from what I hear," said the young man, "it is barely enough"—and the rest at Rome He talked of Rome very pleasantly, he was evidently quite well read, and he quoted Horace about Soracte Miss Winchelsea had "done" that book of Horace for her matriculation, and was delighted to cap his quotation It gave a sort of tone to things this incident—a touch of refinement to mere chatting Fanny expressed a few emotions and Helen interpolated a few sensible remarks, but the bulk of the talk on the girls' side naturally fell to Miss Winchelsea

Before they reached Rome this young man was tacitly of their party They did not know his name nor what he was but it seemed he taught, and Miss Winchelsea had a shrewd idea he was an extension lecturer At any rate he was something of that sort, something gentlemanly and refined without being opulent and impossible She tried once or twice to ascertain whether he came from Oxford or Cambridge, but he missed her timid opportunities She tried to get him to make remarks about those places to see if he would say "go up" to them instead of "go down"—she knew that was how you told a 'Varsity man He used the word "Varsity"—not university—in quite the proper way

They saw as much of Mr Ruskin's Florence as their brief time permitted, the young man met them in the Pitti Gallery and went round with them, chatting brightly and evidently very grateful for their recognition He knew a great deal about art, and all four enjoyed the morning immensely It was fine to go round recognising old favourites and finding new beauties, especially while so many people fumbled helplessly with Baedeker Nor was he a bit of a prig Miss Winchelsea said, and indeed she detested prigs He had a distinct undertow of humour, and was funny, for example without being vulgar, at the expense of the quaint work of Beato Angelico He had a grave seriousness beneath it all, and was quick to seize the moral lessons of the pictures Fanny went softly among these masterpieces, she admitted "she knew so little about them," and she confessed that to her they were "all beautiful" Fanny's "beautiful" inclined to be a little monotonous, Miss Winchelsea thought She had been quite glad when the last sunny Alp had vanished, because of the staccato of Fanny's admiration Helen said little, but Miss Winchelsea had found her a little wanting on the æsthetic side in the old days and was not surprised sometimes she laughed at the young man's

hesitating delicate little jests and sometimes she didn't, and sometimes she seemed quite lost to the art about them in the contemplation of the dresses of the other visitors

At Rome the young man was with them intermittently. A rather "touristy" friend of his took him away at times He complained comically to Miss Winchelsea "I have only two short weeks in Rome," he said, "and my friend Leonard wants to spend a whole day at Tivoli looking at a waterfall"

"What is your friend Leonard?" asked Miss Winchelsea abruptly

"He's the most enthusiastic pedestrian I ever met," the young man replied—amusingly, but a little unsatisfactorily, Miss Winchelsea thought

They had some glorious times, and Fanny could not think what they would have done without him Miss Winchelsea's interest and Fanny's enormous capacity for admiration were insatiable They never flagged—through pictures and sculpture galleries, immense crowded churches, ruins and museums, Judas trees and prickly pears, wine carts and palaces, they admired their way unflinchingly They never saw a stone pine nor a eucalyptus but they named and admired it, they never glimpsed Soracte but they exclaimed Their common ways were made wonderful by imaginative play "Here Cæsar may have walked" they would say "Raphael may have seen *Soracte from this very point*" *They* happened on the tomb of Bibulus "Old Bibulus," said the young man "The oldest monument of Republican Rome!" said Miss Winchelsea

"I'm dreadfully stupid," said Fanny, "but who *was* Bibulus?"

There was a curious little pause

"Wasn't he the person who built the wall?" said Helen

The young man glanced quickly at her and laughed "That was Balbus," he said Helen reddened, but

ne her he nor Miss Winchelsea threw any light upon Fan s ignorance about Bibulus

H en was more taciturn than the other three, but he was always taciturn, and usually she took care tram tickets and things like that, or kept her eye th n if the young man took them, and told him e they were when he wanted them Glorious times had, these young people, in that pale brown cleanly of memories that was once the world Their only row was the shortness of the time They said indeed at the electric trams and the '70 buildings, and that riminal advertisement that glares upon the Forum, out raged their æsthetic feelings unspeakably, but that was only part of the fun And indeed Rome is such a won derful place that at times it made Miss Winchelsea forget some of her most carefully prepared enthusiasms, and Helen, taken unawares, would suddenly admit the beauty of unexpected things Yet Fanny and Helen would have liked a shop window or so in the English quarter if Miss Winchelsea's uncompromising hostility to all other English visitors had not rendered that district impossible

The intellectual and æsthetic fellowship of Miss Winchelsea and the scholarly young man passed insensibly towards a deeper feeling The exuberant Fanny did her best to keep pace with their recondite admiration by playing her "beautiful" with vigour, and saying "Oh! *let's* go," with enormous appetite whenever a new place of interest was mentioned But Helen towards the end developed a certain want of sympathy, that disappointed Miss Winchelsea a little She refused to "see anything" in the face of Beatrice Cenci—Shelley's Beatrice Cenci!—in the Barberini gallery, and one day, when they were deploring the electric trams, she said rather snappishly that "people must get about somehow, and it's better than torturing horses up these horrid little hills" She spoke of the Seven Hills of Rome as "horrid little hills!"

And the day they went on the Palatine—though Miss Winchelsea did not know of this—she remarked suddenly to Fanny, "Don't hurry like that, my dear, *they* don't want us to overtake them. And we don't say the right things for them when we *do* get near."

"I wasn't trying to overtake them," said Fanny, slackening her excessive pace, "I wasn't indeed." And for a minute she was short of breath.

But Miss Winchelsea had come upon happiness. It was only when she came to look back across an intervening tragedy that she quite realised how happy she had been, pacing among the cypress-shadowed ruins, and exchanging the very highest class of information the human mind can possess, the most refined impressions it is possible to convey. Insensibly emotion crept into their intercourse, sunning itself openly and pleasantly at last when Helen's modernity was not too near. Insensibly their interest drifted from the wonderful associations about them to their more intimate and personal feelings. In a tentative way information was supplied, she spoke allusively of her school, of her examination successes, of her gladness that the days of "Cram" were over. He made it quite clear that he also was a teacher. They spoke of the greatness of their calling, of the necessity of sympathy to face its irksome details, of a certain loneliness they sometimes felt.

That was in the Colosseum, and it was as far as they got that day, because Helen returned with Fanny—she had taken her into the upper galleries. Yet the private dreams of Miss Winchelsea, already vivid and concrete enough, became now realistic in the highest degree. She figured that pleasant young man, lecturing in the most edifying way to his students, herself modestly prominent as his intellectual mate and helper; she figured a refined little home, with two bureaus, with white shelves of high-class books, and autotypes of the pictures of Rossetti and Burne Jones, with Morris's wall papers and flowers in pots of beaten copper. Indeed

she figured many things On the Pincio the two had a few precious moments together, while Helen marched Fanny off to see the *muro Torto*, and he spoke at once plainly He said he hoped their friendship was only beginning, that he already found her company very precious to him, that indeed it was more than that

He became nervous, thrusting at his glasses with trembling fingers as though he fancied his emotions made them unstable "I should of course," he said ' tell you things about myself I know it is rather unusual my speaking to you like this Only our meeting has been so accidental—or providential—and I am snatching at things I came to Rome expecting a lonely tour and I have been so very happy, so very happy Quite recently I have found myself in a position—I have dared to think—— And——"

He glanced over his shoulder and stopped He said "Demn!" quite distinctly—and she did not condemn him for that manly lapse into profanity She looked and saw his friend Leonard advancing He drew nearer he raised his hat to Miss Winchelsea, and his smile was almost a grin "I've been looking for you everywhere Snooks" he said "You promised to be on the Piazza steps half an hour ago"

Snooks! The name struck Miss Winchelsea like a blow in the face She did not hear his reply She thought afterwards that Leonard must have considered her the vaguest minded person To this day she is not sure whether she was introduced to Leonard or not, nor what she said to him A sort of mental paralysis was upon her Of all offensive surnames—Snooks!

Helen and Fanny were returning, there were civilities and the young men were receding By a great effort she controlled herself to face the inquiring eyes of her friends All that afternoon she lived the life of a heroine under the indescribable outrage of that name, chatting, observing, with "Snooks" gnawing at her heart From the moment that it first rang upon her

ears, the dream of her happiness was prostrate in the dust. All the refinement she had figured was ruined and defaced by that cognomen's inexorable vulgarity

What was that refined little home to her now spite of autotypes, Morris papers, and bureaus? Athwart it in letters of fire ran an incredible inscription "Mrs Snooks" That may seem a small thing to the reader, but consider the delicate refinement of Miss Winchelsea's mind Be as refined as you can and then think of writing yourself down "Snooks" She conceived herself being addressed as Mrs Snooks by all the people *she liked least*, conceived the patronymic touched with a vague quality of insult She figured a card of grey and silver bearing "Winchelsea" triumphantly effaced by an arrow, Cupid's arrow, in favour of "Snooks" Degrading confession of feminine weakness! She imagined the terrible rejoicings of certain girl friends, *of certain grocer cousins from whom her growing refinement* had long since estranged her How they would make it sprawl across the envelope that would bring their sarcastic congratulations Would even his pleasant company compensate her for that? "It is impossible," she muttered, "impossible! *Snooks!*"

She was sorry for him, but not so sorry as she was for herself For him she had a touch of indignation To be so nice, so refined, while all the time he was "Snooks," to hide under a pretentious gentility of demeanour the badge sinister of his surname seemed a sort of treachery To put it in the language of sentimental science she felt he had "led her on"

There were of course moments of terrible vacillation a period even when something almost like passion bid her throw refinement to the winds And there was something in her, an unexpurgated vestige of vulgarity that made a strenuous attempt at proving that Snooks was not so very bad a name after all Any hovering hesitation *flew before Fanny's manner*, when *Fanny* came with an air of catastrophe to tell that she *also*

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knew the horror Fanny's voice fell to a whisper when she said *Snooks* Miss Winchelsea would not give him any answer when at last, in the Borghese she could have a minute with him, but she promised him a note

She handed him that note in the little book of poetry he had lent her, the little book that had first drawn them together Her refusal was ambiguous allusive She could no more tell him why she rejected him than she could have told a cripple of his hump He too must feel something of the unspeakable quality of his name Indeed he had avoided a dozen chances of telling it she now perceived So she spoke of "obstacles she could not reveal"—"reasons why the thing he spoke of was impossible" She addressed the note with a sh er "E K Snooks"

Things were worse than she had dreaded, he asked her to explain How *could* she explain? Those last two days in Rome were dreadful She was haunted by his air of astonished perplexity She knew she had given him intimate hopes she had not the courage to examine her mind thoroughly for the extent of her encouragement She knew he must think her the most changeable of beings Now that she was in full retreat she would not even perceive his hints of a possible correspondence But in that matter he did a thing that seemed to her at once delicate and romantic He made a go between of Fanny Fanny could not keep the secret and came and told her that night under a transparent pretext of needed advice "Mr Snooks" said Fanny, "wants to write to me Fancy! I had no idea But should I let him?" They talked it over long and earnestly, and Miss Winchelsea was careful to keep the veil over her heart She was already repenting his disregarded hints Why should she not hear of him sometimes—painful though his name must be to her? Miss Winchelsea decided it might be permitted and Fanny kissed her good night with unusual emotion After she had gone Miss Winchelsea sat for a long time

at the window of her little room It was moonlight, and down the street a man sang "Santa Lucia" with almost heart-dissolving tenderness . She sat very still

She breathed a word very softly to herself The word was "*Snooks*" Then she got up with a profound sigh, and went to bed The next morning he said to her meaningly, "I shall hear of you through your friend"

Mr Snooks saw them off from Rome with that pathetic interrogative perplexity still on his face, and if it had not been for Helen he would have retained Miss Winchelsea's hold all in his hand as a sort of encyclopædic keepsake On their way back to England Miss Winchelsea on six separate occasions made Fanny promise to write to her the longest of long letters Fanny, it seemed, would be quite near Mr Snooks Her new school—she was always going to new schools—would be only five miles from Steely Bank and it was in the Steely Bank Polytechnic, and one or two first class schools, that Mr Snooks did his teaching He might even see her at times They could not talk much of him—she and Fanny always spoke of "him," never of Mr Snooks—because Helen was apt to say unsympathetic things about him Her nature had coarsened very much, Miss Winchelsea perceived, since the old Training College days, she had become hard and cynical She thought he had a weak face, mistaking refinement for weakness as people of her stamp are apt to do, and when she heard his name was Snooks, she said she had expected something of the sort Miss Winchelsea was careful to spare her own feelings after that, but Fanny was less circumspect

The girls parted in London, and Miss Winchelsea returned, with a new interest in life, to the Girls' High School in which she had been an increasingly valuable assistant for the last three years Her new interest in life was Fanny as a correspondent, and to give her a

lead she wrote her a lengthy descriptive letter within a fortnight of her return Fanny answered very disappointingly Fanny indeed had no literary gift, but it was new to Miss Winchelsea to find herself deploring the want of gifts in a friend That letter was even criticised aloud in the safe solitude of Miss Winchelsea's study and her criticism, spoken with great bitterness was "Twaddle!" It was full of just the things Miss Winchelsea's letter had been full of, particulars of the school And of Mr Snooks, only this much "I have had a letter from Mr Snooks, and he has been over to see me on two Saturday afternoons running He talked about Rome and you, we both talked about you Your ears must have burnt, my dear "

Miss Winchelsea repressed a desire to demand more explicit information and wrote the sweetest long letter again "Tell me all about yourself, dear That journey has quite refreshed our ancient friendship, and I do so want to keep in touch with you" About Mr Snooks she simply wrote on the fifth page that she was glad Fanny had seen him, and that if he *should* ask after her she was to be remembered to him *very kindly* (underlined) And Fanny replied most obtusely in the key of that "ancient friendship," reminding Miss Winchelsea of a dozen foolish things of those old school girl days at the training college, and saying not a word about Mr Snooks!

For nearly a week Miss Winchelsea was so angry at the failure of Fanny as a go between that she could not write to her And then she wrote less effusively, and in her letter she asked point blank, "Have you seen Mr Snooks?' Fanny's letter was unexpectedly satisfactory "I *have* seen Mr Snooks," she wrote, and having once named him she kept on about him, it was all Snooks—Snooks this and Snooks that He was to give a public lecture said Fanny, among other things Yet Miss Winchelsea after the first glow of gratification still found this letter a little unsatisfactory Fanny did no

report Mr Snooks as saying anything about Miss Winchelsea, nor as looking white and worn, as he ought to have been doing And behold! before she had replied, came a second letter from Fanny on the same theme, quite a gushing letter, and covering six sheets with her loose feminine hand

And about this second letter was a rather odd little thing that Miss Winchelsea only noticed as she re read it the third time Fanny's natural femininity had prevailed *even against the round and clear traditions of the* training college, she was one of those she creatures born to make all her *m*'s and *n*'s and *u*'s and *r*'s and *e*'s alike, and to leave her *o*'s and *a*'s open and her *i*'s undotted So that it was only after an elaborate comparison of word with word that Miss Winchelsea felt assured Mr Snooks was not really "Mr Snooks" at all! In Fanny's first letter of gush he was Mr "Snooks," in her second the spelling was changed to Mr "Senoks" Miss Winchelsea's hand positively trembled as she turned the sheet over—it meant so much to her For it had already begun to seem to her that even the name of Mrs Snooks might be avoided at too great a price, and suddenly—this possibility! She turned over the six sheets, all dappled with that critical name, and everywhere the first letter had the form of an *e*! For a time she walked the room with a hand pressed upon her heart

She spent a whole day pondering this change weighing a letter of inquiry that should be at once discreet and effectual weighing too what action she should take after the answer came She was resolved that if this altered spelling was anything more than a quaint fancy of Fanny's, she would write forthwith to Mr Snooks She had now reached a stage when the minor refinements of behaviour disappear Her excuse remained *uninvented* but she had the subject of her *letter clear* in her mind even to the hint that "circumstances in my life have changed very greatly since we talked together' But she never gave that hint There came

a third letter from that fitful correspondent Fanny The first line proclaimed her "the happiest girl alive"

Miss Winchelsea crushed the letter in her hand—the rest unread—and sat with her face suddenly very still She had received it just before morning school, and had opened it when the junior mathematicians were well under way Presently she resumed reading with an appearance of great calm But after the first sheet she [illegible] the error [illegible] Winchelsea did know "So I said, 'Couldn't you change it?' He didn't see it at first Well, you know, [illegible] he had told me what it really meant, it means [illegible]noaks, only it has got down to Snooks—both Snooks and Noaks, dreadfully vulgar surnames though they be, are really worn forms of Sevenoaks So I said—even I have my bright ideas at times—'if it got down from Sevenoaks to Snooks, why not get it back from Snooks to Sevenoaks?' And the long and the short of it is, dear, he couldn't refuse me, and he changed his spelling there and then to Senoks for the bills of the new lecture And afterwards, when we are married, we shall put in the apostrophe and make it Se'noks Wasn't it kind of him to mind that fancy of mine, when many men would have taken offence? But it is just like him all over, he is as kind as he is clever Because he knew as well as I did that I would have had him in spite of it, had he been ten times Snooks But he did it all the same"

The class was startled by the sound of paper being viciously torn, and looked up to see Miss Winchelsea white in the face, and with some very small pieces of paper clenched in one hand For a few seconds they stared at her stare, and then her expression changed back to a more familiar one "Has anyone finished number three?" she asked in an even tone She remained calm

after that But impositions ruled high that day And she spent two laborious evenings writing letters of various sorts to Fanny before she found a decent congratulatory vein Her reason struggled hopelessly against the persuasion that Fanny had behaved in an exceedingly treacherous manner

One may be extremely refined and still capable of a very sore heart Certainly Miss Winchelsea's heart was very sore She had moods of sexual hostility, in which she generalised uncharitably about mankind "He forgot himself with me, she said "But Fanny is pink and pretty and soft and a fool—a very excellent match for a Man" And by way of a wedding present she sent Fanny a gracefully bound volume of poetry by George Meredith and Fanny wrote back a grossly happy letter to say that it was "*all* beautiful" Miss Winchelsea hoped that some day Mr Senoks might take up that slim book and think for a moment of the donor Fanny wrote several times before and about her marriage, pursuing that fond legend of their "ancient friendship," and giving her happiness in the fullest detail And Miss Winchelsea wrote to Helen for the first time after the Roman journey, saying nothing about the marriage, but expressing very cordial feelings

They had been in Rome at Easter, and Fanny was married in the August vacation She wrote a garrulous letter to Miss Winchelsea, describing her home coming, and the astonishing arrangements of their "teeny weeny" little house Mr Se'noks was now beginning to assume a refinement in Miss Winchelsea's memory out of all proportion to the facts of the case, and she tried in vain to imagine his cultured greatness in a "teeny weeny" little house "Am busy enamelling a cosy corner,' said Fanny, sprawling to the end of her third sheet, "so excuse more" Miss Winchelsea answered in her best style, gently poking fun at Fanny's arrangements, and hoping intensely that Mr Se'noks might see the letter Only this hope enabled her to

write at all, answering not only that letter but one in November and one at Christmas

The two latter communications contained urgent invitations for her to come to Steely Bank on a visit during the Christmas holidays She tried to think that *he* had told her to ask that, but it was too much like Fanny's opulent good nature She could not but believe that he must be sick of his blunder by this time, and she had more than a hope that he would presently write her a letter beginning "Dear Friend" Something subtly tragic in the separation was a great support to her, a sad misunderstanding To have been jilted would have been intolerable But he never wrote that letter beginning "Dear Friend"

For two years Miss Winchelsea could not go to Steely Bank, in spite of the reiterated invitations of Mrs Sevenoaks—it became full Sevenoaks in the second year Then one day near the Easter rest she felt lonely and without a soul to understand her in the world and her mind ran once more on what is called Platonic friendship Fanny was clearly happy and busy in her new sphere of domesticity, but no doubt *he* had his lonely hours Did he ever think of those days in Rome—gone now beyond recalling No one had understood her as he had done, no one in all the world It would be a sort of melancholy pleasure to talk to him again, and what harm could it do? Why should she deny herself? That night she wrote a sonnet all but the last two lines of the octave—which would not come, and the next day she composed a graceful little note to tell Fanny she was coming down

And so she saw him again

Even at the first encounter it was evident he had changed he seemed stouter and less nervous, and it speedily appeared that his conversation had already lost much of its old delicacy There even seemed a justification for Helen's discovery of weakness in his face—in certain lights it *was* weak He seemed busy and pre

occupied about his affairs, and almost under the impression that Miss Winchelsea had come for the sake of Fanny. He discussed his dinner with Fanny in an intelligent way. They only had one good long talk together, and that came to nothing. He did not refer to Rome, and spent some time abusing a man who had stolen an idea he had had for a text book. It did not seem a very wonderful idea to Miss Winchelsea. She discovered he had forgotten the names of more than half the painters whose work they had rejoiced over in Florence.

It was a sadly disappointing week, and Miss Winchelsea was glad when it came to an end. Under various excuses she avoided visiting them again. After a time the visitor's room was occupied by their two little boys, and Fanny's invitations ceased. The intimacy of her letters had long since faded away.

THE DREAM

A Dream of Atmageddon

THE man with the white face entered the carriage at Rugby He moved slowly in spite of the urgency of his porter and even while he was still on the platform I noted how ill he seemed He dropped into the corner over against me with a sigh, made an incomplete attempt to arrange his travelling shawl, and became motionless, with his eyes staring vacantly Presently he was moved by a sense of my observation, looked up at me, and put out a spiritless hand for his newspaper Then he glanced again in my direction

I feigned to read I feared I had unwittingly embarrassed him, and in a moment I was surprised to find him speaking

"I beg your pardon?" said I

"That book" he repeated, pointing a lean finger, "is about dreams"

"Obviously," I answered, for it was Fortnum Roscoe's *Dream States* and the title was on the cover

He hung silent for a space as if he sought words "Yes" he said at last, "but they tell you nothing"

I did not catch his meaning for a second

"They don't know," he added

I looked a little more attentively at his face.

"There are dreams," he said, "and dreams."

That sort of proposition I never dispute.

"I suppose——" he hesitated. "Do you ever dream? I mean vividly."

"I dream very little," I answered. "I doubt if I have three vivid dreams a year."

"Ah!" he said, and seemed for a moment to collect his thoughts.

"Your dreams don't mix with your memories?" he asked abruptly. "You don't find yourself in doubt: did this happen or did it not?"

"Hardly ever. Except just for a momentary hesitation now and then. I suppose few people do."

"Does *he* say——" he indicated the book.

"Says it happens at times and gives the usual explanation about intensity of impression and the like to account for its not happening as a rule. I suppose you know something of these theories——"

"Very little—except that they are wrong."

His emaciated hand played with the strap of the window for a time. I prepared to resume reading, and that seemed to precipitate his next remark. He leant forward almost as though he would touch me.

"Isn't there something called consecutive dreaming—that goes on night after night?"

"I believe there is. There are cases given in most books on mental trouble."

"Mental trouble! Yes. I dare say there are. It's the right place for them. But what I mean——" He looked at his bony knuckles. "Is that sort of thing always dreaming? *Is* it dreaming? Or is it something else? Mightn't it be something else?"

I should have snubbed his persistent conversation but for the drawn anxiety of his face. I remember now the look of his faded eyes and the lids red stained—perhaps you know that look.

"I'm not just arguing about a matter of opinion," he said. "The thing's killing me."

"Dreams?"

"If you call them dreams Night after night Vivid—so vivid this——" (he indicated the landscape that went streaming by the window) "seems unreal in comparison! I can scarcely remember who I am, what business I am on "

He paused "Even now——"

"The dream is always the same—do you mean?" I asked

"It's over"

"You mean?"

"I died"

"Died?"

"Smashed and killed and now so much of me as that dream was is dead Dead for ever I dreamt I was another man, you know, living in a different part of the world and in a different time I dreamt that night after night Night after night I woke into that other life Fresh scenes and fresh happenings—until I came upon the last——"

"When you died?"

"When I died"

"And since then——"

"No" he said "Thank God! That was the end of the dream "

It was clear I was in for this dream And after all, I had an hour before me the light was fading fast and Fortnum Roscoe has a dreary way with him "Living in a different time," I said "do you mean in some different age?"

"Yes"

"Past?"

"No—to come—to come"

"The year three thousand, for example?"

"I don't know what year it was I did when I was asleep when I was dreaming that is but not now—not now that I am awake There's a lot of things I have

forgotten since I woke out of these dreams though I knew them at the time when I was—I suppose it was dreaming They called the year differently from our way of calling the year What did they call it?" He put his hand to his forehead "No," said he, "I forget"

He sat smiling weakly For a moment I feared he did not mean to tell me his dream As a rule I hate people who tell their dreams, but this struck me differently I proffered assistance even "It began——" I suggested

"It was vivid from the first I seemed to wake up in it suddenly And it's curious that in these dreams I am speaking of I never remembered this life I am living now It seemed as if the dream life was enough while it lasted Perhaps—— But I will tell you how I find myself when I do my best to recall it all I don't remember anything clearly until I found myself sitting in a sort of loggia looking out over the sea I had been dozing, and suddenly I woke up—fresh and vivid—not a bit dreamlike—because the girl had stopped fanning me"

"The girl?"

"Yes, the girl You must not interrupt or you will put me out."

He stopped abruptly "You won't think I'm mad?" he said

"No," I answered, "you've been dreaming Tell me your dream"

"I woke up, I say, because the girl had stopped fanning me I was not surprised to find myself there or anything of that sort, you understand I did not feel I had fallen into it suddenly I simply took it up at that point Whatever memory I had of *this* life, this nineteenth century life, faded as I woke, vanished like a dream I knew all about myself knew that my name was no longer Cooper but Hedon and all about my position in the world I've forgotten a lot since I

woke—there s a want of connection—but it was all quite clear and matter of fact then'

He hesitated again gripping the window strap put ting is face forward and looking up to me appealingly "This seems bosh to you?'

No no!" I cried "Go on Tell me what this loggia was like '

It was not really a loggia—I don't know what to call it It faced south It was small It was all in shadow except the semicircle above the balcony that showed the sky and sea and the corner where the girl stood I was on a couch—it was a metal couch with light striped cushions—and the girl was leaning over the balcony with her back to me The light of the sunrise fell on her ear and cheek Her pretty white neck and the little curls that nestled there, and her white shoulder were in the sun, and all the grace of her body was in the cool blue shadow She was dressed—how can I describe it? It was easy and flowing And altogether there she stood, so that it came to me how beautiful and des rable she was, as though I had never seen her before And when at last I s ghed and raised myself upon my arm she turned her face to me——"

He stopped

"I have lived three and fifty years in this world I have had mother sisters, friends wife and daughters—all their faces the play of their faces, I know But the face of this girl—it is much more real to me I can bring it back into memory so that I see it again—I could draw it or paint it And after all——"

He stopped—but I sa d nothing

"The face of a dream—the face of a dream She was beautif il Not that beauty which is terrible cold and worshipful like the beauty of a saint nor that beauty that stirs fierce pas ions but a sort of radiat on sweet lips that softened into smiles, and grave grey eyes And she moved gracefully, she seemed to have part with all pleasant and gracious things——"

He stopped, and his face was downcast and hidden. Then he looked up at me and went on, making no further attempt to disguise his absolute belief in the reality of his story.

"You see, I had thrown up my plans and ambitions, thrown up all I had ever worked for or desired, for her sake. I had been a master man away there in the north, with influence and property and a great reputation, but none of it had seemed worth having beside her. I had come to the place, this city of sunny pleasures, with her, and left all those things to wreck and ruin just to save a remnant at least of my life. While I had been in love with her before I knew that she had any care for me, before I had imagined that she would dare—that we should dare, all my life had seemed vain and hollow, dust and ashes. It *was* dust and ashes. Night after night and through the long days I had longed and desired—my soul had beaten against the thing forbidden!

"But it is impossible for one man to tell another just these things. It's emotion, it's a tint, a light that comes and goes. Only while it's there, everything changes, everything. The thing is I came away and left them in their Crisis to do what they could."

"Left whom?" I asked, puzzled.

"The people up in the north there. You see—in this dream, anyhow—I had been a big man, the sort of man men come to trust in, to group themselves about. Millions of men who had never seen me were ready to do things and risk things because of their confidence in me. I had been playing that game for years, that big laborious game, that vague, monstrous political game amidst intrigues and betrayals, speech and agitation. It was a vast weltering world, and at last I had a sort of leadership against the Gang—you know it was called the Gang—a sort of compromise of scoundrelly projects and base ambitions and vast public emotional stupidities and catch words—the Gang that kept the world noisy and

blind year by year, and all the while that it was drifting drifting towards infinite disaster But I can't expect you to understand the shades and complications of the year —the year something or other ahead I had it all—down to the smallest details—in my dream I suppose I had been dreaming of it before I awoke, and the fading outline of some queer new development I had imagined still hung about me as I rubbed my eyes It was some grubby affair that made me thank God for the sunlight I sat up on the couch and remained looking at the woman and rejoicing—rejoicing that I had come away out of all that tumult and folly and violence before it was too late After all, I thought, this is life—love and beauty, desire and delight, are they not worth all those dismal struggles for vague, gigantic ends And I blamed myself for having ever sought to be a leader when I might have given my days to love But then, thought I, if I had not spent my early days sternly and austerely, I might have wasted myself upon vain and worthless women, and at the thought all my being went out in love and tenderness to my dear mistress, my dear lady, who had come at last and compelled me—compelled me by her invincible charm for me—to lay that life aside

"'You are worth it,' I said, speaking without intending her to hear, 'you are worth it, my dearest one, worth pride and praise and all things Love! to have *you* is worth them all together' And at the murmur of my voice she turned about

"'Come and see,' she cried—I can hear her now—'come and see the sunrise upon Monte Solaro'

"I remem[illegible] ned her at the balcon[illegible] and pointed [illegible] as it were, [illegible] sunlight on her face caressing the lines of her cheeks and neck How can I describe to you the scene we had before us? We were at Capri——"

"I have been there," I said. "I have clambered up Monte Solaro and drunk *vero Capri*—muddy stuff like cider—at the summit."

"Ah!" said the man with the white face; "then perhaps you can tell me—you will know if this was indeed Capri. For in this life I have never been there. Let me describe it. We were in a little room, one of a vast multitude of little rooms, very cool and sunny, hollowed out of the limestone of a sort of cape, very high above the sea. The whole island, you know, was one enormous hotel, complex beyond explaining, and on the other side there were miles of floating hotels, and huge floating stages to which the flying machines came. They called it a pleasure city. Of course, there was none of that in your time—rather, I should say, *is* none of that *now*. Of course. Now!—yes.

"Well, this room of ours was at the extremity of the cape, so that one could see east and west. Eastward was a great cliff—a thousand feet high perhaps—coldly grey except for one bright edge of gold, and beyond it the Isle of the Sirens, and a falling coast that faded and passed into the hot sunrise. And when one turned to the west, distinct and near was a little bay, a scimitar of beach still in shadow. And out of that shadow rose Solaro straight and tall, flushed and golden crested, like a beauty throned, and the white moon was floating behind her in the sky. And before us from east to west stretched the many tinted sea all dotted with sailing boats.

"To the eastward, of course, these little boats were grey and very minute and clear, but to the westward they were little boats of gold—shining gold—almost like little flames. And just below us was a rock with an arch worn through it. The blue sea-water broke to green and foam all round the rock, and a galley came gliding out of the arch."

"I know that rock," I said. "I was nearly drowned there. It is called the Faraglioni."

"*I Faraglioni!* Yes, *she* called it that," answered the man with the white face "There was some story —but that——"

He put his hand to his forehead again "No,' he said, "I forget that story

Well, that is the first thing I remember, the first dream I had, that shaded room and the beautiful air and sky and that dear lady of mine, with her shining arms and her graceful robe, and how we sat and talked in half whispers to one another We talked in whispers not because there was anyone to hear, but because there was still such a freshness of mind between us that our thoughts were a little frightened, I think, to find themselves at last in words And so they went softly

Presently we were hungry and we went from our apartment going by a strange passage with a moving floor, until we came to the great breakfast room—there was a fountain and music. A pleasant and joyful place it was with its sunlight and splashing, and the murmur of plucked strings And we sat and ate and smiled at one another, and I would not heed a man who was watching me from a table near by

"And afterwards we went on to the dancing hall But I cannot describe that hall The place was enormous—larger than any building you have ever seen—and in one place there was the old gate of Capri, caught into the wall of a gallery high overhead Light girders, stems and threads of gold, burst from the pillars like fountains, streamed like an Aurora across the roof and interlaced, like—like conjuring tricks All about the great circle for the dancers there were beautiful figures strange dragons, and intricate and wonderful grotesques bearing lights The place was inundated with artificial light that shamed the newborn day And as we went through the throng the people turned about and looked at us, for all through the world my name and face were known and how I had suddenly thrown up pride and

struggle to come to this place And they looked also at the lady beside me, though half the st rs f how at last she had come to me was unknown or mist d And few of the men who were there I know but ɡed me a happy man, in spite of all the shame and dishonour that had come upon my name

"The air was full of music, full of harmonious scents, full of the rhythm of beautiful motions Thousands of beautiful people swarmed about the hall crowded the galleries sat in a m riad recesses they were dressed in splendid colours and crowned with flowers, thousands danced about the great circle beneath the white images of the ancient gods, and glorious processions of youths and maidens came and went We two danced, not the dreary monotonies of your days—of this time, I mean—but dances that were beautiful intoxicating And even now I can see my lady dancing—dancing joyously She danced you know with a serious face, she danced with a serious dignity, and yet she was smiling at me and caressing me—smiling and caressing with her eyes

"The music was different he murmured ' It went—I cannot describe it, but it was infinitely richer and more varied than any music that has ever come to me awake

"And then—it was when we had done dancing—a man came to speak to me He was a lean, resolute man, very soberly clad for that place, and already I had marked his face watching me in the breakfasting hall and afterwards as we went along the passage I had avoided his eye But now, as we sat in an alcove smiling at the pleasure of all the people who went to and fro across the shining floor, he came and touched me, and spoke to me so that I was forced to listen And he asked that he might speak to me for a while apart

"'No' I said 'I have no secrets from this lady What do you want to tell me?'

"He said it was a trivial matter, or at least a dry matter for a lady to hear

"'Perhaps for me to hear,' said I

"He glanced at her, as though almost he would appeal to her Then he asked me suddenly if I had heard of a great and avenging declaration that Evesham had made Now, Evesham had always before been the man next to myself in the leadership of that great party in the north He was a forcible, hard, and tactless man and only I had been able to control and soften him It was on his account even more than my own, I think that the others had been so dismayed at my retreat So this question about what he had done re awakened my old interest in the life I had put aside just for a moment

"'I have taken no heed of any news for many days,' I said 'What has Evesham been saying?'

"And with that the man began, nothing loth, and I must confess even I was struck by Evesham's reckless folly in the wild and threatening words he had used And this messenger they had sent to me not only told me of Evesham's speech, but went on to ask counsel and to point out what need they had of me While he talked my lady sat a little forward and watched his face and mine

"My old habits of scheming and organising re asserted themselves I could even see myself suddenly returning to the north, and all the dramatic effect of it All that this man said witnessed to the disorder of the party indeed, but not to its damage I should go back stronger than I had come And then I thought of my lady You see—how can I tell you? There were certain peculiarities of our relationship—as things are I need not tell you about that—which would render her presence with me impossible I should have had to leave her indeed, I should have had to renounce her clearly and openly, if I was to do all that I could do in the north And the man knew *that* even as he

talked to her and me, knew it as well as she did, that my steps to duty were—*first*, separation then abandonment At the touch of that thought my dream of a return was shattered I turned on the man suddenly, as he was imagining his eloquence was gaining ground with me

"'What have I to do with these things now? I said 'I have done with them Do you think I am coquetting with your people in coming here?

"'No,' he said, 'but——

"'Why cannot you leave me alone I have done with these things I have ceased to be anything but a private man'

"'Yes,' he answered 'But have you thought?—this talk of war, these reckless challenges these wild aggressions——'

"I stood up

"'No,' I cried 'I won't hear you I took count of all those things, I weighed them—and I have come away'

He seemed to consider the possibility of persistence He looked from me to where the lady sat regarding us

"'War,' he said, as if he were speaking to himself, and then turned slowly from me and walked away

"I stood, caught in the whirl of thoughts his appeal had set going

"I heard my lady's voice

"'Dear she said 'but if they have need of you——'

"She did not finish her sentence, she let it rest there I turned to her sweet face, and the balance of my mood *swayed and reeled*

"'They want me only to do the thing they dare not do themselves,' I said 'If they distrust Evesham they must settle with him themselves'

'She looked at me doubtfully

"'But war——' she said

"I saw a doubt on her face that I had seen before, a doubt of herself and me, the first shadow of the dis-

covery that, seen strongly and completely, must drive us apart for ever

"Now I was an older mind than hers, and I could sway her to this belief or that

"'My dear one,' I said, 'you must not trouble over these things There will be no war Certainly there will be no war The age of wars is past Trust me to know the justice of this case They have no right upon me dearest, and no one has a right upon me I have been free to choose my life, and I have chosen this'

"'But *war*——,' she said

"I sat down beside her I put an arm behind her and took her hand in mine I set myself to drive that doubt away—I set myself to fill her mind with pleasant things again I lied to her, and in lying to her I lied also to myself And she was only too ready to believe me only too ready to forget

"Very soon the shadow had gone again, and we were hastening to our bathing place in the Grotta del Bove Marino where it was our custom to bathe every day We swam and splashed one another, and in that buoyant water I seemed to become something lighter and stronger than a man And at last we came out dripping and rejoicing and raced among the rocks And then I put on a dry bathing dress, and we sat to bask in the sun, and presently I nodded, resting my head against her knee, and she put her hand upon my hair and stroked it softly and I dozed And behold! as it were with the snapping of the string of a violin, I was awakening, and I was in my own bed in Liverpool, in the life of to day

"Only for a time I could not believe that all these vivid moments had been no more than the substance of a dream

"In truth, I could not believe it a dream for all the sobering reality of things about me I bathed and dressed as it were by habit, and as I shaved I argued why I of all men should leave the woman I loved to go

back to fantastic politics in the har an strenuous north Even if Evesham did force the w rld back to war, what was that to me? I was a man witr the heart of a man, and why should I feel the re ponsibility of a deity for the way the world n ight go?

"You know that is not quite the way I think about affairs, about my real affairs I am a solicitor, you know, with a point of view

"The vision was so real, you must understand, so utterly unlike a dream that I kept perpetually recalling trivial irrelevant details even the ornament of a book cover that lay on my wife's sewing machine in the breakfast room recalled with the utmost vividness the gilt line that ran about the seat in the alcove where I had talked with the messenger from my deserted party Have you ever heard of a dream that had a quality like that?"

"Like——?"

"So that afterwards you remembered details you had forgotten"

I thought I had never noticed the point before, but he was right

"Never," I said "That is what you never seem to do with dreams"

"No," he answered "But that is just what I did I am a solicitor, you must understand, in Liverpool and I could not help wondering what the clients and busi

so hence, and worried about the politics of my great great great grand children I was chiefly busy that day *negotiating a ninety nine year building lease* It *was a* private builder in a hurry, and we wanted to tie him in every possible way I had an interview with him, and he showed a *certain* want of temper that sent me to bed still irritated That night I had no dream Nor did I dream the next night, at least, to remember

"Something of that intense reality of conviction vanished I began to feel sure it *was* a dream And then it came again

"When the dream came again, nearly four days later it was very different I think it certain that four days had also elapsed in the dream Many things had happened in the north, and the shadow of them was back again between us, and this time it was not so easily dispelled I began I know with moody musings Why, in spite of all, should I go back go back for all the rest of my days to toil and stress, insults and perpetual dissatisfaction simply to save hundreds of millions of common people, whom I did not love, whom too often I could do no other than despise, from the stress and anguish of war and infinite misrule? And after all I might fail *They* all sought their own narrow ends and why should not I—why should not I also live as a man? And out of such thoughts her voice summoned me, and I lifted my eyes

"I found myself awake and walking We had come out above the Pleasure City, we were near the summit of Monte Solaro and looking towards the bay It was the late afternoon and very clear Far away to the left Ischia hung in a golden haze between sea and sky, and Naples was coldly white against the hills and before us was Vesuvius with a tall and slender streamer feathering at last towards the south and the ruins of Torre Annunziata and Castellamare glittering and near"

I interrupted suddenly "You have been to Capri, of course?"

"Only in this dream," he said, "only in this dream All across the bay beyond Sorrento were the floating palaces of the Pleasure City moored and chained And northward were the broad floating stages that received the aeroplanes Aeroplanes fell out of the sky every afternoon, each bringing its thousands of pleasure seekers from the uttermost parts of the earth to Capri and its delights All these things, I say, stretched below

"B t we not ced tl em only nc lena ly because of an un s al s ght tl at e en ng had to s ow F e war aeroplanes that l ad l ng sl le ed e es n e d stant arsenals of tl e Rl ne h ere n a r ng now in the eastward sky Evesl am had a d l e world by pr d c ng tl em and otle s and sen ng l em to c rcle here and there It vas tl e l rea m e l n he great game of bl ff he was play ng and h d aken even me by s rprise He was one of e nc ed bly stup d energet c people who see sen b hea en to create d sas ers His ene gy to l e f s g an e seemed *so won lerf lly l ke capac y* B t he h l no m g na t on no invent on only a st p l va t d v ng fo ce of w ll and a mad fa th n h s s p d l o luck o pull h m thro gh I remember l ow ve s ood o t upon the headland watcl ng tl e sq ad on c rcl ng fa a vay and ho v I ve ghed the f ll mean ng of he s ght see ng clea ly the way th ngs n st go And hen even t was *not too late I m gl t ha e gone ba k I h nk and* saved the world Tl e pe ple of l e no h wo ld follow me I knew granted only ha n one l ng l re pected the r n oral stan lar ls Tl e ea t an l so h would t ust me as they wo ld tr t no o her no he n man And I knew I had only to p t o he and she would have let me go Not l eca se sl e d d not lo e me

"Only I d d not want to go my w ll vas all the other way abo t I had so ne vly h own off the incub s of respons l l ty I was s ll so f esh a renegade f o n d ty that the la l ght clea ness of wha I *ought* to do had no power at all o touch *my v ll My v ll* was to l ve to gather plea res and make my dear lady happy B t tho gh tl s sense of vast neglec ed dut es had no power to draw me t co l l make me s lent and preocc p ed it r bbed he la s I had spent of half the r br gh ness and ro sed me n o da k me l tat ons in the s lence of the n ght And as I s oo l and wa ched Evesham s aeroplanes s eep o and fro—tho e b rds of infin e ll omen—she stood bes le me watch ng me per

ceiving the trouble indeed, but not perceiving it clearly —her eyes questioning my face, her expression shaded with perplexity Her face was grey because the sunset was fading out of the sky It was no fault of hers that she held me She had asked me to go from her, and again in the night time and with tears she had asked me to go

' At last it was the sense of her that roused me from my mood I turned upon her suddenly and challenged her to race down the mountain slopes 'No,' she said as if I jarred with her gravity, but I was resolved to end that gravity and made her run—no one can be very grey and sad who is out of breath—and when she stumbled I ran with my hand beneath her arm We ran down past a couple of men, who turned back staring in astonishment at my behaviour—they must have recognised my face And halfway down the slope came a t nul in the air clang clank, clang clank and we stopped and presently over the hill crest those war things came flying one behind the other"

The man seemed hesitating on the verge of a description

"What were they like?" I asked

"They had never fought" he said "They were just like our ironclads are nowadays, they had never fought No one knew what they might do, with excited men inside them few even cared to speculate They were great driving things shaped like spear heads without a shaft, with a propeller in the place of the shaft

"Steel?"

"Not steel"

"Aluminium?"

"No, no nothing of that sort An alloy that was very common—as common as brass, for example It was called—let me see——" He squeezed his forehead with the fingers of one hand "I am forgetting everything,' he said

"And they carried guns?"

"Little guns, firing high explosive shells They fired the guns backwards, out of the base of the leaf so to speak, and rammed with the beak That was the theory, you know, but they had never been fought No one could tell exactly what was going to happen And meanwhile I suppose it was very fine to go whirling [illegible] and [illegible] war contrivances that had been invented and had fallen into abeyance during the long peace There were all sorts of these things that people were routing out and furbishing up, infernal things, silly things things that had never been tried, big engines terrible explosives great guns You know the silly way of the ingenious sort of men who make these things they turn 'em out as beavers build dams, and with no more sense of the rivers they're going to divert and the lands they're going to flood!

"As we went down the wi d r_ stepway to our hotel again, in the twilight, I f resaw it all I saw how clearly and inevitably things were driving for war in Evesham's silly, violent hands and I had some inkling of what war was bound to be under these new conditions And even then, though I knew it was drawing near the limit of my opportunity, I could find no will to go back'

He sighed

"That was my last chance

"We didn't go into the city until the sky was full of stars so we walked out upon the high terrace to and fro, and—she counselled me to go back

"'My dearest,' she said, and her sweet face looked up to me, 'this is Death This life you lead is Death Go back to them, go back to your duty——'

"She began to weep, saying be ween her sobs, and clinging to my arm as she said it, 'Go back—Go back'

"Then suddenly she fell mute, and, glancing down

at her face, I read in an instant the thing she had thought to do It was one of those moments when one *sees*

"'No!' I said

"'No?' she asked, in surprise, and I think a little fearful at the answer to her thought

"'Nothing' I said, 'shall send me back Nothing! I have chosen Love, I have chosen and the world must go Whatever happens I will live this life—I will live for *you!* It—nothing shall turn me aside, nothing, my dear one Even if you died—even if you died——'

"'Yes?' she murmured softly.

"'Then—I also would die'

"And before she could speak again I began to talk, talking eloquently—as I *could* do in that life—talking to exalt love to make the life we were living seem heroic and glorious and the thing I was deserting something hard and enormously ignoble that it was a fine thing to set aside I bent all my mind to throw that glamour upon it, seeking not only to convert her but myself to that We talked, and she clung to me, torn too between all that she deemed noble and all that she knew was sweet And at last I did make it heroic, made all the thickening disaster of the world only a sort of glorious setting to our unparalleled love, and we two poor foolish souls strutted there at last, clad in that splendid delusion drunken rather with that glorious delusion, under the still stars

"And so my moment passed

"It was my last chance Even as we went to and fro there, the leaders of the south and east were gathering their resolve, and the hot answer that shattered Evesham's bluffing for ever, took shape and waited And all over Asia, and the ocean, and the South, the air and the wires were throbbing with their warnings to prepare—prepare

"No one living, you know, knew what war was, no

one could imagine, with all these new inventions what horror war might bring I believe most people still believed it would be a matter of bright uniforms and shouting charges and triumphs and flags and bands—in a time when half the world drew its food supply from regions ten thousand miles away——"

The man with the white face paused I glanced at him, and his face was intent on the floor of the carriage A little railway station, a string of loaded trucks, a signal box, and the back of a cottage, shot by the carriage window, and a bridge passed with a clap of noise, echoing the tumult of the train

"After that," he said, " I dreamt often For three weeks of nights that dream was my life And the worst of it was there were nights when I could not dream, when I lay tossing on a bed in *this* accursed life and *there*—somewhere lost to me—things were happening—momentous, terrible things I lived at nights—my days, my waking days, this life I am living now, became a faded, far away dream, a drab setting, the cover of the book"

He thought

"I could tell you all, tell you every little thing in the dream, but as to what I did in the daytime—no *I could not tell—I do not remember* My memory—my memory has gone The business of life slips from me——"

He leant forward and pressed his hands upon his eyes For a long time he said nothing

"And then?" said I

"The war burst like a hurricane"

He stared before him at unspeakable things

"And then?" I urged again

"One touch of unreality," he said, in the low tone of a man who speaks to himself, "and they would have been nightmares But they were not nightmares—they were not nightmares *No!*"

He was silent *for so long that it dawned* upon me

that there was a danger of losing the rest of the story But he went on talking again in the same tone of questioning self communion

What was there to do but flight? I had not thought the war would touch Capri—I had seemed to see Capri as being out of it all, as the contrast to it all, but two nights after the whole place was shouting and bawling, every woman almost and every other man wore a badge—Evesham's badge—and there was no music but a jangling war song over and over again, and everywhere men enlisting, and in the dancing halls they were drilling The whole island was awhirl with rumours, it was said again and again, that fighting had begun I had not expected this I had seen so little of the life of pleasure that I had failed to reckon with this violence of the amateurs And as for me, I was out of it I was like a man who might have prevented the firing of a magazine The time had gone I was no one the vainest stripling with a badge counted for more than I The crowd jostled us and bawled in our ears, that accursed song deafened us, a woman shrieked at my lady because no badge was on her, and we two went back to our own place again, ruffled and insulted—my lady white and silent, and I aquiver with rage So furious was I, I could have quarrelled with her if I could have found one shade of accusation in her eyes

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

and came again

"'We must get out of this place,' I said over and over 'I have made my choice, and I will have no hand in these troubles I will have nothing of this war We have taken our lives out of all these things This is no refuge for us Let us go'

"And the next day we were already in flight from the war that covered the world

"And all the rest was Flight—all the rest was Flight"

He mused darkly

"How much was there of it?"

He made no answer

"How many days?"

His face was white and drawn and his hands were clenched He took no heed of my cur ty

I tried to draw him back to his story with questions "Where did you go?" I said

"When?

"When you left Capri"

"South west," he said and glanced at me for a second "We went in a boat

"But I should have thought an aeroplane?"

"They had been seized"

I questioned him no more Presently I thought he was beginning again He broke out in an argumentative monotone

"But why should it be? If indeed this battle, this slaughter and stress is life, why have we this craving for pleasure and beauty? If there is no refuge, if there is no place of peace, and if all our dreams of quiet places are a folly and a snare, why have we such dreams? Surely it was no ignoble cravings, no base intentions had brought us to this it was Love had isolated us Love had come to me with her eyes and robed in her beauty, more glorious than all else in life, in the very shape and colour of life and summoned me away I had silenced all the voices I had answered all the questions—I had come to her And suddenly there was nothing but War and Death!"

I had an inspiration "After all," I said, "it could have been only a dream"

"A dream! he cried, flaming upon me, "a dream —when even now——"

For the first time he became animated A faint flush crept into his cheek He raised his open hand and clenched it, and dropped it to his knee He spoke, looking away from me, and for all the rest of the time

he looked away "We are but phantoms," he said, "and the phantoms of phantoms, desires like cloud shadows and wills of straw that eddy in the wind, the days pass use and wont carry us through as a train carries the shadow of its lights—so be it! But one thing is real and certain, one thing is no dreamstuff, but eternal and enduring It is the centre of my life, and all other things about it are subordinate or altogether vain I loved her, that woman of a dream And she and I are dead together!

"A dream! How can it be a dream, when it has drenched a living life with unappeasable sorrow, when it makes all that I have lived for and cared for, worth less and unmeaning?

"Until that very moment when she was killed I believed we had still a chance of getting away," he said. "All through the night and morning that we sailed across the sea from Capri to Salerno, we talked of escape We were full of hope, and it clung about us to the end, hope for the life together we should lead, out of it all, out of the battle and struggle, the wild and empty passions, the empty arbitrary 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not' of the world We were uplifted, as though our quest was a holy thing, as though love for one another was a mission . .

"Even when from our boat we saw the fair face of that great rock Capri—already scarred and gashed by the gun emplacements and hiding places that were to make it a fastness—we reckoned nothing of the imminent slaughter, though the fury of preparation hung about in puffs and clouds of dust at a hundred points amidst the grey, but, indeed, I made a text of that and talked There, you know, was the rock, still beautiful for all its scars, with its countless windows and arches and ways, tier upon tier, for a thousand feet, a vast carving of grey, broken by vine-clad terraces and lemon and orange groves and masses of agave and prickly pear, and puffs of almond blossom And out under the archway that

is built over the Marina Piccola other boats were coming, and as we came round the cape and within sight of the mainland, another string of boats came into view, driving before the wind towards the south west. In a little while a multitude had come out, the remoter just specks of ultramarine in the shadow of the eastward cliff.

"'It is love and reason,' I said, 'fleeing from all this madness of war.'

"And though we presently saw a squadron of aeroplanes flying across the southern sky we did not heed it. There it was—a line of dots in the sky—and then more, dotting the south eastern horizon, and then still more, until all that quarter of the sky was stippled with blue specks. Now they were all thin little strokes of blue and now one and now a multitude would heel and catch the sun and become short flashes of light. They came, rising and falling and growing larger like some huge flight of gulls or rooks or such like birds moving with a marvellous uniformity, and ever as they drew nearer they spread over a greater width of sky. The southward wing flung itself in an arrow headed cloud athwart the sun. And then suddenly they swept round to the eastward and streamed eastward, growing smaller and smaller and clearer and clearer again until they vanished from the sky. And after that we noted to the northward and very high Evesham's fighting machines hanging high over Naples like an evening swarm of gnats.

"It seemed to have no more to do with us than a flight of birds.

"Even the mutter of guns far away in the south east seemed to us to signify nothing.

"Each day, each dream after that, we were still exalted, still seeking that refuge where we might live and love. Fatigue had come upon us, pain and many distresses. For though we were dusty and stained by our toilsome tramping, and half starved and with the horror of the dead men we had seen and the flight of the peasants—for very soon a gust of fighting swept up the

peninsula—with these things haunting our minds it still resulted only in a deepening resolution to escape Oh but she was brave and patient! She who had never faced hardship and exposure had courage for herself—and me We went to and fro seeking an outlet, over a country all commandeered and ransacked by the gathering hosts of war Always we went on foot At first there were other fugitives, but we did not mingle with them Some escaped northward, some were caught in the torrent of peasantry that swept along the main roads many gave themselves into the hands of the soldiery and were sent northward Many of the men were impres[illegible]d But we kept away from these things we had br[illegible] no money to bribe a passage north, and I fea[illegible] or my lady at the hands of these conscript c[illegible] We had landed at Salerno, and we had been [illegible]d back from Cava, and we had tried to cross towards Taranto by a pass over Monte Alburno but we had been driven back for want of food, and so we had come down among the marshes by Pæstum where those great temples stand alone I had some vague idea that by Pæstum it might be possible to find a boat or something and take once more to sea And there it was the battle overtook us

"A sort of soul blindness had me Plainly I could see that we were being hemmed in that the great net of that giant Warfare had us in its toils Many times we had seen the levies that had come down from the north going to and fro, and had come upon them in the distance amidst the mountains making ways for the ammunition and preparing the mounting of the guns Once we fancied they had fired at us, taking us for spies—at any rate a shot had gone shuddering over us Several times we had hidden in woods from hovering aeroplanes

"But all these things do not matter now, these nights of flight and pain We were in an open place near those great temples at Pæstum at last, on a blank stony place dotted with spiky bushes empty and desolate

and so flat that a grove of eucalyptus far away showed to the feet of its stems How I can see it! My la l was sitting down under a bush resting a little, for she was very weak and weary, and I was standing up watching to see if I could tell the distance of the firing that came and went They were still, you know, fighting far from each other, with those terrible new weap ns that had never before been used guns that would carry *beyond sight*, and aeroplanes that would do—— What *they* would do no man could foretell

"I knew that we were between the two armies, and that they drew together I knew we were in danger *and that we could not stop there and rest!*

"Though all these things were in my mind they were in the background They seemed to be affairs beyond our concern Chiefly, I was thinking of my lady *An aching distress filled me For the first time* she had owned herself beaten and had fallen a weeping Behind me I could hear her sobbing, but I would not turn round to her because I knew she had need of weeping, and had held herself so far and so long for me It was well, I thought, that she would weep and rest and then we would toil on again, for I had no inkling of the thing that hung so near Even now I can see her as she sat there, her lovely hair upon her shoulder, can mark again the deepening hollow of her cheek

"'If we had parted,' she said, 'if I had let you go'

"'No,' said I 'Even now, I do not repent I will not repent, I made my choice, and I will hold on to the end'

"And then——

"Overhead in the sky flashed something and burst, and all about us I heard the bullets making a noise like *a handful of peas suddenly thrown* They chipped the stones about us, and whirled fragments from the bricks and passed "

He put his hand to his mouth, and then moistened his lips

"At the flash I had turned about . . .

"You know—she stood up——

"She stood up, you know, and moved a step towards me——

"As though she wanted to reach me——

"And she had been shot through the heart"

He stopped and stared at me I felt all that foolish incapacity an Englishman feels on such occasions I met his eyes for a moment, and then stared out of the window For a long space we kept silence When at last I [illegible] -r, his arms [illegible]

He [illegible]

"I [illegible] s, in my arms—as though it mattered I don't know why They seemed a sort of sanctuary, you know, they had lasted so long, I suppose

"She must have died almost instantly Only—I talked to her—all the way"

Silence again

"I have seen those temples," I said abruptly, and indeed he had brought those still, sunlit arcades of worn sandstone very vividly before me

"It was the brown one, the big brown one I sat down on a fallen pillar and held her in my arms . . . Silent after the first babble was over And after a little while the lizards came out and ran about again, as though nothing unusual was going on, as though nothing had changed . . . It was tremendously still there, the sun high and the shadows still, even the shadows of the weeds upon the entablature were still—in spite of the thudding and banging that went all about the sky

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"Three or four times shells burst about the bea h and then that ceased Each time that happened all the lizards scuttled in and hid for a space That was all the mischief done, except that once a stray b llet gashed the stone hard by—made just a fresh br ght surface

"*As the shadows grew longer, the stillness seemed greater*

"The curious thing," he remarked with the manner of a man who makes a trivial conversation is that I didn't *think*—I didn t think at all I sat with her in my arms amidst the stones—in a sort of lethargy—stagnant

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He stopped, and there was a long silence

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"Yes"

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kne v clearly that men were coming into the solitude and that that was a last outrage

"I stood up and walked through the temple, and then there came into sight—first one man with a yellow face, dressed in a uniform of dirty white, trimmed with blue, and then several, climbing to the crest of the old wall of the vanished city and crouching there They were little br ght figures in the sunlight, and there they hung weapon in hand peering cautiously before them

And further away I saw others and then more at another point in the wall It was a long lax line of men in open order

'Presently the man I had first seen stood *up* and shouted a command, and his men came tumbling down the wall and into the high weeds towards the temple He scrambled down with them and led them He came facing towards me and when he saw me he stopped

"At first I had watched these men with a mere curiosity but when I had seen they meant to come to the temple I was moved to forbid them I shouted to the officer

'You must not come here,' I cried, '*I* am here I am here with my dead'

He stared, and then shouted a question back to me in some unknown tongue

'I repeated what I had said

' He shouted again, and I folded my arms and stood still Presently he spoke to his men and came forward He carr ed a drawn sword

"I signed to him to keep away, but he continued to advance I told him again very patiently and clearly 'You must not come here These are old temples and I am here with my dead'

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"He gr... [illegible]

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I became aware of a change in the rhythm of the train. The brakes lifted their voices and the carriage jarred and jerked. This present world insisted upon itself, became clamorous. I saw through the steamy window huge electric lights glaring down from tall masts upon a fog, saw rows of stationary empty carriages passing by, and then a signal box, hoisting its constellation of green and red into the murky London twilight, marched after them. I looked again at his drawn features.

"He ran me through the heart. It was with a sort of astonishment—no fear, no pain—but just amazement that I felt it pierce me, felt the sword drive home into my body. It didn't hurt, you know. It didn't hurt at all."

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"Euston!" cried a voice

"Do you mean——?"

"There was no pain no sting or smart Amazement and then darkness sweeping over everything The hot, brutal face before me, the face of the man who had

killed me, seemed to recede. It swept out of existence——"

"Euston!" clamoured the voices outside, "Euston!"

The carriage door opened admitting a flood of sound, and a porter stood regarding us. The sounds of doors slamming, and the hoof clatter of cab horses, and behind these things the featureless remote roar of the London cobble stones, came to my ears. A truckload of lighted lamps blazed along the platform.

"A darkness, a flood of darkness that opened and spread and blotted out all things."

"Any luggage, sir?" said the porter.

"And that was the end?" I asked.

He seemed to hesitate. Then, almost inaudibly, he answered, "*No*."

"You mean?"

"I couldn't get to her. She was there on the other side of the temple—— And then——"

"Yes," I insisted. "Yes?"

"Nightmares," he cried, "nightmares indeed! My God! Great birds that fought and tore."

